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ABSTRACT

The Harlan County Public Library Literacy Project (Kentucky) provided rural-oriented, basic literacy, and oral history programs to a community of 100,000-200,000. The goal of the project was to produce six booklets about local people and issues, to be used as literacy materials in programs with Appalachian students. Students wanted to produce stories about people's experiences of living in Appalachia, stories that value their culture and help to preserve it. The first booklet, "Hard Times Happy Times," is a collection of stories written by a Harlan County literacy student. While only a few students were comfortable writing such stories, many students were willing to tell the stories. As a result, the rest of the booklets were developed through taped interviews with students and local residents from Harlan and Letcher Counties, and members of the Virginia Black Lung Association. The booklets were sent to 28 libraries in the Eastern Kentucky area, and shared with county literacy personnel, Kentucky Literacy Commissions, and members of the Community Based Literacy coalition sponsored by the University of Tennessee. Attachments include a list of libraries/literacy programs and people receiving program booklets, student evaluations, and the literacy booklets: "Hard Times Happy Times" (Dorothy Maggard); "Digging for Justice" (Virginia Black Lung Association); "Those Were the Days" (Jesse Renfro); "Mountain Memories" (Ralph Collier); "In Honor of the Old Folks" (Hiram Day and Mae Hensley); and "The Times of My Life" (O. T. Henderson). (SWC)

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ED 415 881

Harlan County Public Library, Final Performance Report for Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) Title VI, Library Literacy Program

IR056851

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IR

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YES

HARLAN COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY
LITERACY PROJECT

GRANT NO. R167A20415

Amount Awarded: $15,530.80
Amount Expended: $14,345.97

Report: Carol E. Warren
(606) 589-4150

Financial Agent: Thelma Creech
(606) 573-5220

Part II: Quantitative Data

Provide the following information about this project by filling in the blanks or putting a checkmark next to the answer that best describes your project. If any of the questions are not relevant to this project, write N/A.

1. What is the size of the community served by this project?

___ under 10,000
___ between 10,000 - 25,000
_X_ between 25,000 - 50,000 Harlan County alone .
___ between 50,000 - 100,000
_X_ between 100,000-200,000 area in which project materials are being used
___ over 200,000

2. What type of project was this? (Check as many as applicable)

___ Recruitment
___ Retention
___ Space Renovation
___ Coalition Building
___ Public Awareness
___ Training
_X_ Rural Oriented
_X_ Basic Literacy
_X_ Other (describe) oral history

___ Collection Development
___ Tutoring
___ Computer Assisted
___ Other Technology
___ Employment Oriented
___ Intergenerational/Family
___ English as a Second Language (ESL)

3. Did you target a particular population? (Check as many as applicable)

___ Homeless
___ Hearing Impaired
___ Visually Impaired
___ Learning Disabled
___ Mentally Disabled
___ Workforce/Workplace
___ Inmates of Correctional Institutions
_X_ Other (describe) Appalachian

___ Homebound
___ Seniors/Older Citizens
___ Migrant Workers
___ Indian Tribes
___ Intergenerational/Families
___ English as a Second Language

4. If this project involved tutoring, what tutoring method was used?

___ Laubach ___ LVA ___ Michigan Method
___ Orton-Gillingham ___ Other (describe)

N/A

5. If this project involved tutoring, how was it provided? (check as many as applicable)

___one-on-one tutoring ___small group instruction
___classroom instruction

N/A

6.(a) If this project involved tutoring, was the learning progress of the adult literacy students quantitatively measured? ___ yes ___ no

(If "yes", identify any tests, questionnaires, or standard methods used and summarize student results.)

N/A

6.(b) If this project involved tutoring, were qualitative outcomes of student progress documented? ___ yes ___no

(If "yes", briefly describe how progress was determined and summarize student results. You may attach samples of any documents used to record observations or demonstrate outcomes.)

N/A

7. During the course of this project were any of the following items produced? If so, attach a copy to each copy of the report.

___ bibliography
___ curriculum guide
___ training manual
___ public relations audiovisual
___ training audiovisual
___ recruitment brochure
___ resource directory
___ evaluation report
___ survey
___ newsletter(s)
_X_ other (describe)
booklets to be used by literacy programs
____

8. During the course of this project:

How many adult learners were served? (i.e., individuals who made use of the library's literacy project services in some way)_________
Of those served, how many received direct tutoring service?_________
How many hours of direct tutoring service did they receive? _____________
How many new volunteer tutors were trained? _________
How many current volunteer tutors received additional training? ____________
How many volunteer tutors (total) were involved? ________
How many non-tutor volunteers were recruited?___________
How many service hours were provided by non-tutors?._______
How many librarians were oriented to literacy methods, materials, and students?_______
How many trainers of tutors were trained? _____________

Numbers unknown - however, over two dozen literacy programs in Kentucky, Virginia, West Virginia, and Tennessee are using the materials. There are probably other programs using them of which we are not aware.

Part III: Narrative Report

Provide a narrative report that includes the following information:

1. A comparison of actual accomplishments to the goals and objectives set forth in the approved application. Describe any major changes or revisions in the program with respect to approved activities, staffing, and budgeting, including unspent funds. Explain why established goals and objectives were not met, if applicable.

2. Provide a comparison between proposed and actual expenditures by budget category, i.e., personnel, travel, materials, etc.

3. Provide, as appropriate, specific details as to the activities undertaken -- e.g., if library materials were acquired, describe the kinds of materials purchased; if a needs assessment was conducted, describe the results of the assessment; if training was provided, describe the training and include the dates and topics; if services were contracted out, describe the contractor's activities.

4. Describe the role the library has played in the accomplishment of the goals and objectives set forth in the approved grant, including whether the library was involved in the project's implementation or as a resource and site only.

5. Provide names of agencies and organizations recruited to volunteer their services for the literacy program or that were involved in the coordination and planning of the literacy program. Describe the nature of their role.

The goal of the Harlan County Library Literacy Project was to produce six booklets about local people and issues, to be used as literacy materials in programs with Appalachian students. This goal was achieved as planned. (Please see enclosed booklets.)

Several occurrences changed the complexion of the project somewhat between the time the application for the grant was made, and the time the project actually was able to begin - that is, between December, 1991 and October, 1992. Further surveys of our Harlan County students indicated that their chief interest would be in seeing the project produce stories about people's experiences of living in Appalachia. They wanted to read material that valued their culture, and helped to preserve it. They wanted to read about, and tell their children about the way life was in Harlan County and the surrounding area while they were growing up. Things are changing rapidly here, and many adults see these changes as a real threat to their sense of rootedness in the community.

As a result, the first booklet, Hard Times, Happy Times, is a collection of stories written by a student of Harlan County Literacy. It was received very enthusiastically by both our students, and those from other community literacy programs in the area. We found that although few students or local people felt comfortable writing such stories, many were willing to tell them. The rest of the booklets were developed through taped interviews with students and "local characters" from Harlan and Letcher Counties in Kentucky, and members of the Virginia Black Lung Association.

The booklets were distributed as they were completed, and were sent to 28 libraries in the Eastern Kentucky area (see Attachment A). They were taken by the Harlan County Literacy Staff to tutor training sessions, and regional meetings of county literacy personnel throughout the area, as well as to the Kentucky Literacy Commission assemblies in Frankfort and Louisville. They were also shared with members of the Community Based Literacy coalition sponsored by University of Tennessee. (See attachment B). These programs are actively using the materials.

Evaluations mailed back to us were uniformly positive. Several tutors noted that having read stories that were similar to their own, many of their students were now willing to try writing about their own experiences. A number of programs requested more copies - in fact, all 500 copies of the first three booklets have now been placed in the hands of libraries and literacy programs. Requests are still coming in for the others. (See attachment C)

The nature of the booklets have made them popular with the local public in general. One woman wrote, "I want to request copies of your other books. Although I am enrolled in a Masters program, these books are sheer reading pleasure." The project seems to have been good for the community as a whole. Our County Literacy Coordinator stated that given a choice, the local students consistently choose these materials over those from the publishing companies.

The Harlan County Library provided assistance in handling the financial aspects of the project, as well as in showcasing the booklets and making them available to local people. Both branches, in Harlan and Cumberland, Ky. were most cooperative. Several of the county libraries to whom the booklets were sent wrote notes expressing approval of the project. (See attachment C)

Overall, the project has had a positive affect on Harlan County Literacy. It has gained attention for the program within the community, and among the other literacy programs in the area. Harlan County Literacy received the Kentucky Literacy Commission's"Outstanding Program Award" in 1992, based on the production of original literacy materials. The program is seen as valuing the culture of the area, and thus valuing the background of our students.

PART III - BUDGET INFORMATION

COMPARISON OF PROPOSED AND ACTUAL EXPENDITURES

FISCAL YEAR 1992-1993

The total budget for 1992-93 was $15,530.80. Actual expenditures were $14,345.97. Following is a comparison between the proposed and actual expenditures by budget category.

		Budget	Actual
A.	Personnel	10,560.00	10,559.40
B.	Fringe Benefits	1,027.80	894.85
C.	Travel	273.00	252.00
D.	Equipment - not applicable		
E.	Supplies (consumable)	470.00	239.12
F.	Contractual Services - not applicable		
G.	Library Materials - not applicable		
H.	Other	3,200.00	2,400.00
I.	Total Direct Charges	15,530.00	14,345.97
J.	Indirect Charges - not applicable		
	TOTAL	$15,530.00	$14,345.97

A. Personnel Salaries were .60 less than budgeted due to an error in writing a check.

Proposed	Actual
10,560.00	10,559.40

B. Fringe Benefits were less than budgeted.

FICA was as budgeted.

Unemployment Insurance and Workers Compensation were less than budgeted due to a reduction in rate and an error in calculation. They were calculated on the basis of the total of requested and donated amount for salaries instead of only the requested anount.

	Proposed	Actual
FICA	807.84	807.84
UI	158.40	47.52
WC	61.56	40.09

C. Travel was less than budgeted because some information had already been collected and less travel was needed.

Proposed	Actual
273.00	252.00

D. Equipment - not applicable

E. Supplies. Cost of supplies was less than expected. Some booklets were hand delivered rather than mailed. *

Proposed	Actual
470.00	239.12

F. Contractual Services - not applicable

G. Library Materials - not applicable

H. Other. The cost of printing was less than budgeted and there was no expenditure for promotional activities. #

Proposed	Actual
3,200.00	2,400.00

I. Total Direct Charges

Proposed	Actual
$15,530.80	$14,345.97

J. Indirect Charges - not applicable

K. Total Project Costs

Proposed	Actual
$15,530.80	$14,345.97

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* At the time the original request was made, we did not know whether funding would be secured enabling the Community-Based Literacy groups to continue to meet on a regular basis. As it turned out, this funding was secured, enabling us to hand deliver copies of the booklets to these groups instead of having to mail them each time to several dozen additional people.

The printer we selected is located in a neighboring county. He really appreciated the project and gave us substantial discounts on all six printings. Promotional activities were unnecessary - local and regional programs found out about the materials quickly through various regularly scheduled meetings.

ATTACHMENT A

LOCAL LIBRARIES/LITERACY PROGRAMS RECEIVING MATERIALS FROM PROJECT

Pineville Public Library
Tennessee Ave. & Walnut St.
Pineville, KY 40977

Middlesboro-Bell Co. Public Library
126 S. 20th St.
Middlesboro, KY 40965

Boyd Co. Public Library
1740 Central Ave.
Ashland, KY 41101

Boyd Co. Public Library
Catlettsburg Branch
2704 Louisa St.
Catlettsburg, KY 41129

Breathitt Co. Pub. Lib.
1024 College Ave.
Jackson, KY 41339

Clay Co. Pub. Lib.
211 Bridge St.
Manchester, KY 40962

Floyd Co. Pub. Lib.
18 N. Arnold Ave.
Prestonsburg, KY 41653

Greenup Co. Pub. LIb.
614 Main St.
Greenup, KY 41144

Jackson Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 160
McKee, KY 40447

Johnson Co. Pub. LIb.
Corner Church and Main
Paintsville, KY 41240

Knott Co. Pub. LIb.
Box 667
Hindman, KY 41822

Knox Co. Pub. LIb.
Daniel Boone Dr.
Barbourville, KY 40906

Lawrence Co. Pub. LIb.
102 W. Main & Jefferson
Louisa, KY 41230

Whitley Co. Pub. Lib.
285 So. Third St.
Williamsburg, KY 40769

Lee Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box V, Main St.
Beattyville, KY 41311

Leslie Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 498
Hyden, KY 41749

Letcher Co. Pub. Lib.
101 Main St.
Whitesburg, KY 41858

Letcher Co. Pub. Lib.
Jenkins Branch
Box 687
Jenkins, KY 41537

Magoffin Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 435
Salyersville, KY 41465

Martin Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 1318
Inez, KY 41224

Rufus M. Reed Public Library
P.O. Box 359
Lovely, KY 41231

McCreary Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 8
Whitley City, KY 42653

John F. Kennedy Mem. Pub. Lib.
408 Prestonsburg St.
West Liberty, KY 41472

Owsley Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 280
Booneville, KY 41314

Perry Co. Pub. Lib.
479 High St.
Hazard, KY 41701

Pike Co. Pub. Lib.
Drawer L, 309 Main St.
Elkhorn City, KY 41522

Pikeville Free Pub. Lib.
210 Pike Ave.
Pikeville, KY 41501

Wolfe Co. Pub. Lib.
P.O. Box 10
Campton, KY 41301

ATTACHMENT B

PERSONS/PROGRAMS RECEIVING MATERIALS THROUGH COMMUNITY IN THE CLASSROOM

Trish Ahern
ACBE
1805 Florida Ave N.W.
Washington, DC 20010
(202) 462-6333
Workshop 4

Cheryl Atwell
General Delivery
Berwind, WV 24815
(304) 875-3839
Workshop 1,3,4,5

Anita B. Armbrister
Ivanhoe Civic League
P.O. Box 201
Ivanhoe, VA 24350
(703) 699-1383
Workshop 1,2,3,4

Donna Barton
CCATW, Dayhoit
P.O. Box 416
Wallins, KY 40873
(606) 573-5981
Workshop 1,4

Beth Bingman
Center for Literacy
P.O. Box 922
St. Paul, VA
(703) 762-7430
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Mike Blackwell
Ivanhoe Civic League
P.O. Box 201
Evanhoe, VA 24350
(703) 699-1383 699-6691
Workshop 1,2,3

Randy Butcher
Box 246
Caretta, WV 24821
(304) 875-2952
Workshop 1,3,5

Jacqueline Cason
Lonsdale Improve. Organ.
3216 McPherson Street
Knoxville, TN 37921
(615) 521-7860
Workshop 2

Fran Collins
A.C.C.
Route 6, Box 67
Manchester, KY 40962
(606) 598-8022
Workshop 2,3,4,5

Pat Cornett
RR. 1, Box 721
Manchester, KY 40962
(606) 598-8715
Workshop 1,3,4,5

Lori Croley
P.O. Box 733
Wmsburg, KY 40769
(606) 549-1964
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Minnie Douglas
109 High St.
Jellico, TN 37762
(615) 784-4111
Workshop 4

Sue Ellison
P.O. Box 14
Eagan, TN 37730
(615) 784-4038
Workshop 1,4

Alice Engle
P.O. Box 92
St. Charles, VA 24282
(703) 383-4606
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Jackie Evans
Woodland Co. Trust
Box 156
Clairfield, TN 37715
(615) 784-8444
Workshop 1

Maria Exner
Route 1
Dungannon, VA 24245
(703) 995-2305
Workshop 1

Todd Garland
P.O. Box 953
Whitesburg, KY 41858
(606) 633-8440
Workshop 3,4

Madonna Gies, RSM
100 Pauley St., #23
Jonesville, VA 24263
(703) 346-3224
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Barbara Greene
DDC
P.O. Box 195
Nickelsville, VA 24271
(703) 762-5050
Workshop 2,3,4,5

Frankie Gulley
P.O. Box 282
Clincho, VA 24226
(703) 835-9176
Workshop 2,3,4,5

Edna Gulley
P.O. Box 282
Clincho, VA 24226
(703) 835-9176
Workshop 4,5

Sharon Hinton
3011 Johnston St.
Knoxville, TN 37921
(615) 524-7982
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Carol Honeycut
Route 1 Box 180
Nickelsville, VA 24271
(703) 479-2833
Workshop 2,3,4,5

Teri Howard
CCATW
Dayhoit, KY 40824
(606) 573-5515
Workshop 3,4,5

Sharon Kimberlin
Route 1, Box 247
St. Charles, VA 24282
(703) 383-4249
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Jean Korkish
McClure River Valley
Community Development
Box 354
Nora, VA 24272
(703) 835-8774
Workshop 2,3,4,5

Judy Martin
A.C.C.
Box 308
Annville, KY 40402
(606) 364-3524
Workshop 2

Janice Munsey
2304 Texas Ave., #61
Knoxville, TN 37921
(615) 522-3264
Workshop 1,3,4,5

ATTACHMENT B

Judy Murray
405 Dogwood Trail
London, KY 40741
Workshop 5

Jessie Napier
A.C.C.
Route 4, Box 590
Manchester, KY 40762
(606) 598-8715
Workshop 2

Donna Parker
A.C.C.
250 Herndon St., Apt. 16
Berea, KY 40403
Workshop 2

Linda Powers
Mt. Women's Exchange
205 5th Street
Jellico, TN 37762
Workshop 3

Joan Robinett
Concerned Citizens Against
Toxic Waste
P.O. Box 761
Loyall, KY 40854
(606) 573-1214
Workshop 3

Roy Silver
CCATW, Dayhoit
804 Stacey Hill
Cumberland, KY 40823
(606) 589-5324
Workshop 1,3,4,5

Jennifer Taylor
McClure River Valley
Community Development
Box 354
Nora, VA 24272
(703) 835-8774
Workshop 1

Bonnie Terry
P.O. Box 14
Eagan, TN 37730
(615) 784-9214
Workshop 4

Joy Thompson
P.O. Box 157
Fall Rock, KY 40932
(606) 598-8715
Workshop 1,3,4,5

Carolene Turner
Rt. 5, Box 233
Manchester, KY 40962
(606) 598-8715
Workshop 1,3,4,5

Winnie Vautrin
Dungannon Develop. Commision
P.O. Box 1116
Gate City, BA 24251
(703) 386-2324
Workshop 2,3

Carol Warren
Harlan Co. Literacy
306 Central St.
Cumberland, KY 40823
(606) 589-4150
Workshop 3,4,5

Connie White
Center for Literacy Studies
2046 Terrace Avenue
Knoxville, TN 37996-3400
(615) 974-4109 376-1266
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Beverly Woliver
P.O. Box 733
Wmsburg, KY 40769
(606) 549-1964
Workshop 1,2,3,4,5

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you? Yes

Is the book easy to understand? Yes

Are the directions easy to understand? Yes

Are there words in the book you do not know? YES

Are there words in the book you do not use? Yes

What do you like about the book? The book was intereting

What do you not like about the book? noting I Like the Book

Cut along dotted line.

OT

Book by Dorothy Maggard

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you?
yes

Is the book easy to understand?
yes

Are the directions easy to understand?
yes

Are there words in the book you do not know?
yes

Are there words in the book you do not use?
yes

What do you like about the book?
The old Storyes

What do you not like about the book?
I like everythings

Cut along dotted line.

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you? Yes

Is the book easy to understand? Yes

Are the directions easy to understand? YES

Are there words in the book you do not know? Yes

Are there words in the book you do not use? Yes

What do you like about the book? It's inteersting

What do you not like about the book? Notathing it is interresting

OT

Cut along dotted line.

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you? yes

Is the book easy to understand? YES

Are the directions easy to understand? YES

Are there words in the book you do not know? NO

Are there words in the book you do not use? NO

What do you like about the book? It is very inresting. The book is a great book.

What do you not like about the book? I like everything about it. I love old stores. I would like to read more like these. It is a very clean book to read. I love it.

Mountain Memories

Cut along dotted line.

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE STUDENT EVALUATION

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE LIBRARY/PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer and return the following questions so we can serve you better.

How many booklets did you receive? 4

Were the booklets delivered in good condition? yes

How many booklets were distributed to students/tutors? Placed in New Adult Reader section of the library.

Were the students/tutors interested in the booklets subject matter? Unknown

Were the booklets culturally suitable for your students? Readers of all ages borrow them.

↓

Were the booklets written at a suitable reading level for your students?

Would you like to receive more booklets like these? Yes.

Would you like to receive other titles, as they are published? Yes.

Please feel free to add any comments. Your suggestions help us create more useful materials.

At this time there are no students/tutors meeting in the library. We notice juveniles checking New Reader books out also.

The Harlan County Literacy Materials Project appreciates your comments.
Please mail this sheet using the address on the opposite side of this page. Thank you very much.

Magoffin County Library

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE LIBRARY/PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer and return the following questions so we can serve you better.

How many booklets did you receive? 4

Were the booklets delivered in good condition? yes

How many booklets were distributed to students/tutors? 4

Were the students/tutors interested in the booklets subject matter? yes!

Were the booklets culturally suitable for your students? yes

Were the booklets written at a suitable reading level for your students? yes

Would you like to receive more booklets like these? yes

Would you like to receive other titles, as they are published? yes

Please feel free to add any comments. Your suggestions help us create more useful materials.

We have a difficult time finding reading material to interest our older students. I think these will work well.

Thanks,
Sydney

The Harlan County Literacy Materials Project appreciates your comments.
Please mail this sheet using the address on the opposite side of this page. Thank you very much.

Pike Co. Literacy
Public Lib.

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE LIBRARY/PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer and return the following questions so we can serve you better.

How many booklets did you receive? 4

Were the booklets delivered in good condition? Yes

How many booklets were distributed to students/tutors? 4

Were the students/tutors interested in the booklets subject matter?

Very interested!

Were the booklets culturally suitable for your students?

Students related well to the stories in the book.

Were the booklets written at a suitable reading level for your students?

Yes

Would you like to receive more booklets like these?

Yes

Would you like to receive other titles, as they are published?

Yes

Please feel free to add any comments. Your suggestions help us create more useful materials.

Stories such as the ones in Hard Times and Mountain Memories encourage the students we work with to write their own tales.

Thank you
Mary Petty
Johnson County Literacy Projec

The Harlan County Literacy Materials Project appreciates your comments.
Please mail this sheet using the address on the opposite side of this page. Thank you very much.

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE LIBRARY/PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer and return the following questions so we can serve you better.

How many booklets did you receive?

five (I think)

Were the booklets delivered in good condition?

yes

How many booklets were distributed to students/tutors?

all

Were the students/tutors interested in the booklets subject matter?

yes

Were the booklets culturally suitable for your students?

yes

Were the booklets written at a suitable reading level for your students?

yes

Would you like to receive more booklets like these?

yes

Would you like to receive other titles, as they are published?

yes

Please feel free to add any comments. Your suggestions help us create more useful materials.

The reading level is good, and the stories are about things our students can relate to, but they would be better if a real story with a good plot, some suspense, etc. could be developed from the writers experience.

Knott County Library/
Literacy

The Harlan County Literacy Materials Project appreciates your comments.
Please mail this sheet using the address on the opposite side of this page. Thank you very much.

ATTACHMENT C - SAMPLE LIBRARY/PROGRAM EVALUATION

Please answer and return the following questions so we can serve you better.

How many booklets did you receive? 4

Were the booklets delivered in good condition? Yes

How many booklets were distributed to students/tutors?

1 copy library New Reader collection, 1 copy Bookmobile New Readers coll.
2 copies to Interfaith Tutors program

Were the students/tutors interested in the booklets subject matter?

Yes

Were the booklets culturally suitable for your students?

Yes

Were the booklets written at a suitable reading level for your students?

Yes

Would you like to receive more booklets like these?

~~Yes~~ no

Would you like to receive other titles, as they are published?

Yes

Please feel free to add any comments. Your suggestions help us create more useful materials.

Two copies for library are sufficient
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Ron Day
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Hard Times
Happy Times

by

Dorothy Maggard

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Hard Times,

Happy Times

by
Dorothy
Maggard

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

"I was raised up in a coal camp in Hawthorne, Virginia, until I was eleven years old."

And so Dorothy Maggard begins her series of life stories. Dorothy wrote these stories so she could share some important things with other people.

"At first I was scared, because I couldn't read or write too well. But now I can write a story because I had someone who has really tried to help me."

We are very happy, and very lucky that we can give these stories to you as a booklet. All the stories are true. We hope you like them.

Carol Warren
Todd Garland

A note to the tutor:

Two years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the first in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was written by Dorothy Maggard, a reading student of the Harlan County Literacy program. Dorothy is happy that her stories will be used by other reading students. Dorothy wants you to know that all these stories are true.

This booklet has been written at Grade 3 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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For information address:
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306 Central Street
Cumberland, Kentucky 40823

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This Is When I Went Hungry

When I was growing up, there were times that we went hungry because we didn't have food to eat. When we went to school, we got lunch. Most of the time that was all we got to eat. We would go home from school and play until it got dark. Then we would go in the house and get ready for bed. And the next day was always the same.

There were lots of times we didn't get to go to school, and then we didn't get anything to eat. We sometimes walked three miles from Hawthorne to Norton, to my Aunt's house, to get one meal.

I'm so glad that kids don't have to do without food today. The reason I say *today* is because there are food stamps. Parents can get lots of help if they really need it—that is, if they don't drink and if they really care for their kids. If you have got kids, please take care of them. Don't let them go hungry if you can help it at all.

I say this because I had a boy. When he was little he went hungry, too. I didn't have anything for him to eat. I also had a baby. I didn't have milk for him. All I could do was feel sorry for my kids, and hope that my husband would bring them something to eat. But he never did. I got a divorce from him and married another man who is still my husband today. He always made sure that there was food on the table and shoes on the kids' feet. And if anyone of them went to bed hungry, it was their own fault.

Hawthorne, Virginia

I was raised up in a coal camp in Hawthorne, Virginia until I was eleven years old. We lived in a three room house in a coal camp. Everybody who lived there had kids, except for about two families. One of them was my grandparents.

We used kerosene lamps. My mother washed clothes on a washboard. We had an outside toilet. We also carried water to drink, cook and wash. It was fun. Children played in coal dust, because there was no grass.

My daddy would stay at home and watch my sister and me, while my brother and mom would go and get coal. They would put as many as three or four sacks of coal on a wheel barrow and haul it home to keep us warm.

When we kids would fight we would make up in minutes. But when the grownups fought, they would try to kill each other. Our mom and dad would fight. It bothered us so much all we could do was cry.

My daddy tried to kill my mommy. My brother was at the next door friend's house—asleep. So I went over and woke him. I told my brother that daddy was going to kill mommy. So my brother ran home and my aunt asked me to go over to her house to baby sit.

When I got to my aunt's house all of her kids were there. My dad's other brother's boy was also there. A few minutes later, my aunt came in. She was telling about Mom and Dad a-fighting.

About that time, we heard a gun go off.
My aunt said, "My God, Paul has killed Lila!"

I didn't know anything after that. When I came to myself, I looked up on the porch. There was my daddy laying on the porch dead. I started looking for my brother. When I asked about him, someone said he went to call the ambulance and the police. But it was too late.

When the police got there, I asked them if they were going to take my brother to jail. I was begging them not to take him. There were three police cars up there that day. They had two loads of drunks. And the other police car was for my brother.

I was begging them not to take my brother. The police said, "You better be still, or we are going to take you, too."

The police said they wouldn't give my brother time for what he did, but they were going to put him in school.

The Danger That We Were In

Have you ever tried to skate on a frozen pond? Well, my sister and I did. But the pond wasn't frozen enough. Every time we got to the side of the pond, the ice would start cracking. So we would go back to the center of the pond.

I didn't know the danger I was putting my sister and myself in on that frozen pond. I guess that I was about ten years old, and my sister was about eight years old. You just don't see the danger you are in. Thank God neither one of us was hurt, and that the ice in the center of the pond didn't break on us.

The pond we were on was on a strip mine. We lived in a coal camp and there was stripping there, which is how the pond got there. It was about two houses deep, I guess. And years later they put deep mines there. When you are kids a-playing, you don't see or know danger.

My Mistakes In Marriage

When I was fourteen years old, we lived in Virginia. I was going to Norton school. I met a boy over there. His name was Bobby. We went together for two years and we wanted to get married. But his mom said before she'd sign the papers for him to marry, she would sign for him to go to the army first.

I told Bobby that if we could not get married, I was going to marry the first boy who asked me.

When we moved to Kentucky, I was sixteen years old, and I met another boy. We went together for two years and I had his baby.

While the baby was still little, I left and went back to Tennessee. And I did marry the first boy who asked. I got myself into trouble that way. He would beat up on me most of the time. I was married to him for five years, and then we got a divorce.

Well, after I got married, it wasn't long until I heard that Bobby had to get married. His mom had to sign papers after all. Because the girl was pregnant.

He married my brother's sister-in-law. My brother's wife told me that after Bobby and that girl had two kids, he walked off and left them.

See, if his mom wasn't against us so much, and let us go ahead and get married, it wouldn't have happened that way. I don't believe it would anyway. See, you can't always pick for your kids. You've got to let them pick for themselves.

I've been married for twenty-two years to this man I've got now. I hope that we can stay together until death do us part. And I believe we are going to stay together.

My Baby

When I was seventeen years old, I had a baby. I had him out of wedlock. Before this baby was born, there was a woman who came to me and asked me what I was going to do with the baby. I told her by God's help I was going to have my baby and raise it. She said she thought that since I wasn't married I would let her adopt it. I told her that would be crazy.

I did have the baby. It was a boy, and I did keep him. I loved him very much. When this baby was one year old, I got married. I didn't marry the baby's daddy.

Well, there was another woman who asked me if I would give her my baby. I said no way, but she kept asking for him. She said if I would give her my baby he wouldn't want for anything. She had one son of her own. Still, she wanted mine.

I couldn't give him anything he wanted, but I did love him. We went through some rough times together. We went for days without food. But I did love him and I did keep him. This baby I'm writing about is twenty-eight years old now.

His daddy doesn't even claim him. My baby knows his daddy, and his daddy knows him. But my baby's daddy doesn't even speak to him. I don't understand how a person can have kids and not want them.

I guess that is how it is sometimes. They've got kids and don't want anything to do with them. They don't know anything about their kids.

Well, I can say one thing. My son's grandpa did love him. My boy stayed a lot with his grandpa until he died. He has been dead since my boy was about fourteen years old. We still talk about his grandpa some, when my boy visits me.

My son's grandpa that I am talking about is his daddy's daddy. He was a very good person. I loved my son's grandpa as if he were my daddy. My own daddy has been dead since I was eleven years old.

I Used To Love Christmas

I used to love to see Christmas come. Henry and I would go to town and get all the kids a gift for Christmas. There were eleven kids in the family. Betty is the oldest, so she was the one who stayed up and helped put the toys under the tree. She also got to help me make the treats for the kids.

We would tell the kids if they wanted to see Santa Claus they had better get in bed and go to sleep. They all looked forward to getting their toys and treats.

My kids didn't know what Christmas was until I met Henry. He and I met when his daughter, Betty, was about thirteen years old. The first Christmas I was with them, I asked Betty if they ever fixed treats on Christmas before. She said no. They just got candy and nuts of some kind. I asked her if she would like to help me fix all the kids a treat. They all looked forward to their treats from then on—every Christmas.

Now they all are grown up and have kids. There are twenty-one grand kids and ten of our own. When all my kids became grown, we fixed all the grandkids a treat on Christmas. We would buy all of the grandkids a gift, and I would fix them all a treat.

When we made treats we would get some paper bags. We would put an apple, an orange, a tangerine, some candy and nuts in the bags. Then we would roll the bags down like they do when you buy something out of the store. We would put the kids' names on them, and put the treats with their gifts.

Well, if things don't change this year, we won't get to buy for them. But they all know we still love them. You see, kids know when someone really does love them. It doesn't take money or gifts to let them know how you feel.

It does bother us because we can't buy for them. But some of them know that we are not able to buy for them.

They say, "Granny, it don't matter if you can't buy for us. We know that you and Papaw still love us."

When the kids tell me something like that, it really makes me feel good.

I Like Animals

Do you like animals? Well, I do like animals. When we lived up the river, I would watch the chipmunks. They would carry buckeyes and put them in a hole out from the house. I also like to watch squirrels as they climb in a tree and get their food.

I also like dogs and cats. I used to not like cats. But I've liked dogs ever since I can remember. I wasn't mean to cats, or anything like that. I just didn't like them. I started liking cats one day while I was in the garden. A big yellow cat came right up to me, rubbing my arm with his head.

When I was a very young girl, I wanted a lamb. I would sit on the porch and watch goats and sheep. That is when I wanted one of the lambs.

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Digging For Justice

The Virginia Black Lung Association

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Digging for Justice

by
Calvin Dunford
Andy Lawson
Raymond Phillips

"Members of the Virginia Black Lung Association know what it means to dig for justice.

They have worked for a number of years to help miners who suffer from Black Lung disease. Their struggle goes on.

Many thanks to these dedicated men for sharing their stories and their lives as miners with us."

Carol Warren
Todd Garland

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

A note to the tutor:

Three years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the fifth in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was developed from oral stories told to us by members of the Virginia Black Lung Association (VBLA). They are miners or people who used to work in the mines; and now they are working to make Black Lung benefits easier to get. Right now, only four people out of every one hundred who apply for Black Lung benefits will get them. These men would like you to know that all these stories are true, and they are happy these stories will be used by people who are learning to read.

This booklet has been written at Grade 4 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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A pick and shovel

Things didn't really use to be as bad in the mines as they are now. There was a time when about all you took in with you was a pick and shovel. And you didn't stir up very much dust loading coal with that. But now, they've got so many machines. And you can go in and turn one of those on, and there's all kinds of dust going everywhere.

When the inspectors come in the mines to check it out, they've got everything all washed down and cleaned up so there's no dust laying around. Why, there's usually not even a machine working. Maybe they'll start up the motor and let it idle, so it will sound like something's getting done. But, you see, we know different! And yet, they'll try to tell you that the mining industry is cleaned up.

The kids growing up in the coal camp didn't get treats very often. There just wasn't the money. Most of us got ice cream only on the Fourth of July. Of course, the bosses' kids got it more often.

A truck would bring the ice cream to the company store about once a week. The boys would always know when it was going to come, and we'd be at the store that day. Each of us would bring a spoon, because this is what happened.

The truck driver would go into the store and carry out any empty ice cream containers. They were big five-gallon things. He'd leave those empty containers on the porch while he took in the full ones. You know how there's always kind of a crevice around the bottom of a container like that? Well, there was always a little of the ice cream stuck in those crevices. The boys would go after that with the spoons until every bit of ice cream was gone.

When I was growing up, hardly any of the women had washing machines. They had to wash the clothes on a big washboard with their bare knuckles. That's what my mother did. I think she must have done the work of a dozen women! She took care of our family, and managed to take in three or four boarders, too.

Mom worked hard in the garden that we had near the Post Office, hoeing and weeding. Then when the vegetables had been gathered, she'd can every bit. She also grew lots of flowers in the yard. Our home always was nice and clean—she saw to that. The children would help her with the spring cleaning every year. I used to have to clean the bed springs, which was pretty hard work. And then I'd clean the windows with Bon Ami.

The Company Store

Mom would use this "Octagon" laundry soap that you could buy at the Company Store. If you saved the coupons from the wrapper, you could trade them in for a towel or wash cloth when you had saved enough. Another laundry soap some of the women used was made by Proctor and Gamble. It was called "P and G"—all the women said that stood for "push and grunt."

The Company Store sold all the things the miners needed. It had clothes, household items, and any food you couldn't get from your garden. It was good quality, but you did have to buy things there if you wanted to charge them. Sometimes the men used up all their pay at the Company Store before they ever saw the paycheck.

The miners got paid every two weeks on Saturday. It was almost like a holiday—everybody came into town. You'd see all the men in line waiting for their pay.

At that time, there were Hungarians, Italians, Irish, Greeks, Jews, Blacks—it didn't matter what language you spoke, or where you were from. Nobody cared about that, because we were all poor! But I can tell you, there weren't any better people on this earth than those miners and their families.

When you got paid, you'd get this envelope, which listed all the expenses you had. They were taken out of your pay. You had to pay for the tools you used, the powder you'd shoot coal with, just everything. You even had to pay if you got your tools sharpened. Then you had to pay for anything you charged at the Company Store.

By that time, there might not be a lot left! You'd take a look down at the bottom of the list. If you'd used up all your pay, there would just be this little crooked line there. The miners called that line a snake—and they sure hated to see one!

You'd see a miner open his envelope, take a quick look, and say something like, "Oh no! It's another dang snake!"

One of my best memories about growing up is the times we would make apple butter. A bunch of us would drive over to Uncle Sam's place in Crockett's Cove. We could get all the apples we wanted there—for free. All we had to do was pick them from the tree, or off the ground.

My Aunt Lou and Aunt Emma would always be asked to come for a visit at that time. They loved to help with the apple butter. We'd get all the apples home, and they would start to cook them in a big copper kettle.

While they stirred up the apple butter, they would all talk about the days when they were young, and all the old times. You never heard such stories! They worked, and talked, and everybody enjoyed the whole thing. They would stay until all the apple butter was cooked and canned.

These same two aunts would always come when we'd get ready to kill the hogs. They would help out with all the work, because there was a lot to do. They'd can sausage and tenderloin, and render the lard—things like that.

The Bishop Tipple

When I first started working in the mines I was eighteen. I started working at the Bishop Tipple as a bone picker. That was in 1942, and the pay for bone pickers was 75 cents an hour. I worked as a bone picker for twelve years.

The coal that was being sent out from the tipple to be loaded came by on a big metal sheet that we called the "Bone Table." It was about 50 feet long. When the cars came out of the mine, the men dumped the coal into the top of the tipple. There were big "shakers" that shook the coal up and let it fall onto the "table" little by little.

As the coal came rolling along the big metal "table," the bone pickers had to take out any rock or slate that was mixed in with it. The coal didn't roll by so fast that you couldn't get the rocks out—but you sure had to keep moving. It was real steady work.

On my first payday as a bone picker, I got a little over sixteen dollars. That was for two weeks' work. It doesn't sound like a lot now. But that was quite a bit of money for a single fellow at the time.

Hobos, President Roosevelt and John L. Lewis

A lot of these young folks nowadays don't appreciate the union because they don't know how rough times used to be. Way back in the '30's there was just no money for workers. Poor people didn't have a thing! Money was as scarce as hens' teeth. Sometimes people had to go from house to house, just trying to get a bite to eat. A piece of cornbread or a biscuit made them real happy.

I used to see trains going up and down the Clinch Valley loaded with hobos trying to find a place to work. That was during the Great Depression, and things were real bad.

The lights sure came on for working people when Roosevelt took office. He put thousands of men to work building bridges, roads, and other things that were needed. We could probably use a program like the W.P.A. today! And the C.C.C. was a great thing, too. Lots of people got jobs building parks and things like that, which everybody can enjoy. This Hungry Mother Park at Marion was built then.

But one of the best things that came out of the Roosevelt years was a law letting working people organize unions. The unions could work out contracts for the workers and the company to abide by. That hadn't been done before. Until that time, the companies pretty much did what they wanted. The pay wasn't always fair, and the working conditions weren't always safe. They didn't even have to give us vacations!

Young boys will go down here and work at some non-union mine. They don't think the union matters. But they don't understand the things a lot of us went through to get the union. It's not just a matter of what you get paid. It's the kind of hours you have to work, whether things are kept safe in the mines—a lot of things. Some of these outfits have people working long, long hours. They ask some of the men to do a lot of overtime, and then lay off a bunch of the others.

The United Mine Workers of America started coming into this area during the 1930's. John L. Lewis was President of the International then, and when he talked, people sure did listen. Things got better every time the UMWA won a new contract for the workers.

And the union has helped in getting some laws passed about these black lung benefits. The problem is with the people who get to make the decisions about who is eligible. They listen too much to the companies and all of their doctors. There are still union men in the struggle to get a Bill passed that will work right.

You've got Black Lung

I was in the hospital down in North Carolina, and they did a chest X-ray. The doctor told me, "You've got something on your lung. You'd better go see your doctor when you get back home!"

It's funny, isn't it? I'd been to doctor after doctor around here for fifteen years, and they didn't tell me that. Then I go down there and they do one X-ray and find it.

The company can do that. They find doctors who'll say you've just got asthma or something. Every time you find a doctor who says you have black lung, they'll find two who say you don't.

And that costs us a lot of money. We can't afford to just keep going to doctors—the prices are too high. Some of them charge as much as $1500 for a work-up. But the company can pay for as many doctors as it needs to beat you out of your benefits.

When I applied for black lung benefits, I had to go to a doctor and get tested. When they test you, they put this big needle about eight inches long in your vein. I don't think people realize what torture a person has to go through for those tests.

They keep the needle in your arm all day. They make you stay for eight hours. You get put on a treadmill . . . all kinds of things. Then they put their little spigot on the needle and take some blood from your arm to test.

When you get finished and they finally take the needle out, your arm is just as black as that bag over there. And sore! It hurts so bad you can hardly do anything with it for a few days.

A few weeks later, I got a letter saying, "Your application has been approved." And I started getting my check for black lung. Then about five years later, I got another letter saying I didn't qualify. They asked me to pay back all the money I'd gotten in those five years.

You know, I went to fight in World War II. I always thought this country stood for justice for all. But that isn't justice! I came to find out that there isn't really liberty and justice for all. It's liberty and justice for a few.

Overpayment

Sometimes the government would say you were eligible for black lung benefits, and later change their mind. They would send you a letter saying you qualified for benefits. Then you would start to draw a black lung check. In a few years, you might have gotten $15,000 or $20,000 from them.

After those years, you could get a letter saying that your case had been reviewed. They might tell you they decided you were not eligible for benefits after all. That part is hard enough to understand, but that isn't all. They tell you that you have to pay that $15,000 or $20,000 back! "Overpayment" is what they call it.

They told one man they had found records showing that he was a smoker. They claimed that what ruined his lungs was smoking. So because he smoked, he couldn't be allowed to claim black lung benefits. That same thing can happen to anybody. You get a letter telling you that you have to give back every dime of that money.

Well, the way I see it, that was really your money. The government said you were entitled to it, and they mailed you the checks. They shouldn't be able to just say, "That wasn't really yours and we want it back." If someone made a mistake, it was them, not the miner. And, of course, you've already spent those checks as they came in.

I got checks for fourteen years. I figured I was qualified for those benefits. No way would I pay that money back. A lot of men don't have much money, though. If you really don't have the money, they won't try to take it. But I have some houses that I rent. They told me I had to use every penny of the income from those houses to pay off that debt. I got me a lawyer.

There's a lot about the way the black lung benefits have been handled that hasn't been fair. A lot of miners and their families have gotten treated rough. But that's why we're working hard to change things. The Black Lung Benefits Restoration Act is a big step in the right direction. Now we've just got to get our folks in Washington to vote for it!

This bill we are trying to get passed now would help a lot. For one thing, it says that if a mistake is made, the government can't ask a man to pay back money that he got for years. Most of the time, people just don't have that money any more. They've already used it.

As it is now, you can hardly feel secure about having a monthly check. There's the worry in the back of your mind that you might have to give it all back. With this black lung bill, that will change.

Another thing it will do is put a limit on the amount of medical facts the company can bring to court against you. Now, they can get as many doctors and papers as they want. A miner can't pay to have all that done in his favor. It would cost a fortune!

This bill is going to make it a little easier for widows to get some help, too. Right now, if a man dies, his wife has to show that the black lung itself caused his death. If he died of a heart attack, or pneumonia, that's no good. Even though those things can be a result of the black lung, it doesn't count . . . the widow can't get his check.

And if the man was trying to prove he had black lung, but died before he qualified, the same is true. There's no chance now for that widow to get the benefits. We hope this bill will change some of that, too. There are a lot of men who haven't been able to qualify, who should have been. We think those widows ought to be considered.

The sad thing is that we don't get much support on the subject of black lung benefits from young miners. The only thing the young people care about right now is what their paycheck looks like at the end of the month. They don't understand. For them there's no hereafter. So they don't see the need for good benefit laws to help their family after they're gone. And they don't see the real need for a good union.

The union sees that people work, too, and that the work gets given out fairly. This boy was in here the other day, who started a shop in town. They work with bulldozers and such. Well, they voted the union out.

Then the county government gave them a $2 million dollar contract to build a hotel. I heard there weren't but five jobs involved, although that was an awful lot of money. But a man at the college said, "No, there have to be more people than that working."

I never saw more than four or five people on the job. But the county said there were forty people hired to work on it. So I made a special trip over there to see what I could find out. I made out like I wanted to get equipment from them. I knew if I just went in and asked how many people were working there, they'd tell me it wasn't any of my business.

So I asked the woman who was there, "How many people you got working here, anyway?"

And she said, "I don't know. I'll let you talk to the boss."

Well, he came around, and I talked to him about some equipment and asked about the size of the crew. Said I'd heard it was big. He said, "No, we don't have but four people. We're hardly doing anything."

And all this time the county was acting like this project was going to give lots of people jobs. And $2 million dollars being paid for it. I think any time the government is going to put up that much money for something, they ought to guarantee that there will be at least 100 jobs. It would sure help some of the people get off food stamps and that kind of thing. A lot of them would a whole lot rather have a job.

Now I like to see public employees get a fair wage. But I don't think the government ought to be taxing poor people to give the government workers and teachers a raise.

I talked to a woman teacher who was going on about how bad she needed a raise. So I asked her, "Just how much do you make, anyway?"

She said, "I make $36,500 a year."

Well, she had been in the system for about twenty years. When she started out, I'm sure she didn't make even $20,000 a year. But she had gotten raises until she made $36,500.

I said, "And you think I should pay for you to have a raise? You've got to understand my business, too. You get a warm, dry place to work, and you get snow days, and three months off for summer vacation. Let me tell you something. The best year I had when I worked in the mines, back in 1979 when I quit, I made $17,000."

I told her, "Any time anybody on the outside makes more than a coal miner, it's not fair. A coal miner ought to make top wage. When they go in there, they are endangering their lives. They're breathing coal dust, and risking explosions. And here you are, making twice what I ever made, and saying you need a raise. Well, I can't go along with that!"

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

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Those were the days

by Jesse Renfro

From driving mules to driving trucks, Jesse Renfro has done it. He started working when he was 12 years old, and he has worked in the coal mines, a funeral home, and as a truck driver.

Jesse has seen a lot and done a lot—but, he has lived over eighty years! In this book, we get to read many of his stories. We hope you enjoy them as much as we do.

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

Carol Warren
Todd Garland

A note to the tutor:

Three years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the last in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was developed from oral stories told to us by Jesse Renfro, who was born in Harlan County and has now lived here more than eighty years. Jesse would like you to know that all these stories are true, and he is happy these stories will be used by people who are learning to read.

This booklet has been written at Grade 3 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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This book is dedicated with love to:

My wife, Edna Mae;
her sister, Mrs. Margaret K. Carson

and my grandchildren:

Larry Eugene
Linda Juveto
Rochelle Denise
and Anthony Scott.

My early history

My grandmother came from down near Pineville—I'm not sure exactly where. She came up here to work with her husband, Ransom Turner.

My grandfather used to take logs and run them down the river into Pineville. But they had to wait until a tide come. They'd get on the logs and ride them to Pineville when the water was high enough. I'd have been scared of that!

There would be a flood, and they'd put the logs in the water. They had great big things they called bayonets. They were long and sharp! The men would stick them in the logs to keep them going.

He worked for a man up here at a place called Gaden. He hauled goods for the man's store with mules and a wagon. He'd make a trip every day for groceries for the store.

Then when I was born, I lived in Lynn Holler, a place close to Ivy Hill. We still have land over there.

My grandmother lived to be 106. She would go into town on a big gray horse, and I'd ride behind her. We'd go over where Creech Drug Store is now.

At that time there were two stores there. They were grocery stores, and two brothers ran them, Marion Howard and Lloyd Howard. We always came down there to trade, and I liked to come with her.

My grandmother said she was a slave up at Ages Creek—Brookside, I think they call it now. There were a bunch more slaves besides her, too. She said when the men came in who owned the place, they would sit down at this big table to eat.

They had these big hob-nails on their shoes. As they walked by the slave women who were fixing the meal, the men would stomp down on the women's feet.

I had an Uncle who lived over here on Poor Fork. His name was Aaron Renfro. He had a girl named Lucy, and a boy with a bad leg. His name was Arthur. And then Mose Renfro was my daddy.

My mother said he died when I was only two weeks old. He had TB and was awful sick when I was born.

Now at that time they had midwives in place of doctors. They thought I was dead, and they had me all laid out. My daddy told them, "Bring my baby in here and let me see him."

Miss Burgin, that was the midwife's name, said, "Well there's nothin' to do but go in there and get him."

So they came in to pick me up. And when they got to me and started to carry me to my daddy, they discovered me breathing. That's about all I really know about my daddy.

I started to work when I was about twelve years old. My brother Harry and I used to work for a man here in town. His name was Sam Howard, and he was the father of the two men who ran the stores. We used to help him clean up, and things.

Problems with land

There used to be a lot of black people living at Cranks Creek. Paris Pope, my first cousin, used to live up there. He had a lot of land, and he stayed there until he died. Now his brother Elijah didn't stay at Cranks much. He went to Black Mountain and got some land there.

Mother had quite a bit of land, too, at one time. After she married into the Long family, they took our land. They sold it, and their land too, to Black Mountain Coal Company for $10,000. Never gave any of us Renfros a dime of it.

We had twenty acres here near town, too. But to keep from having any trouble, we just let them have it. Now, it was ours, but we let them have it. Then my brother George Long got in the act. Whenever Harry or I would go to the court house to try to pay taxes on our place he would stop us.

"Naw, naw," he'd say. "I'm going to pay it." And he wouldn't let us pay anything at all. Well, come to find out—he wasn't paying any of it, either! After he died, I found that out.

Then I went up to the court house and got on to them about it. George had gotten them to take us Renfro children's names plumb off it. I really got after them over that. And you can bet our names went back on those papers at the court house quick!

I've got grandchildren, now. They are supposed to have some of this land. Some of my children keep sending me things to sign about it, but I'm not signing nothin'! My grandchildren will have it when I'm gone.

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My son

I had a son out in California, Eugene Eubank. He was the sweetest thing in the world. He was only nine years old when his mother came and stole him from me. That was out at Crummies Creek. I didn't see him again until he was fifteen. And then we came into contact again about two years before he died.

When I got word that he died, I wanted to go to the funeral. That was the first time I went to see him, and I had to fly out there. But they said I did real well.

First I went to Middlesboro, and spent the night with a boy who was going to go with me. His mother and my wife were sisters. We left the next morning and went to Knoxville.

We got on a small plane that took us into Salt Lake City. That's where I hit the big plane. It went above the clouds, and they were telling us how high up we were. But I never got scared a bit—I did just fine.

I was so happy to get there. That was the first time I saw my grandchildren, and they were already grown. And I got to see my son.

The preacher said at the funeral, "Now you all need to cry. You better be sure that your souls are all right like his was. I've been with him—and his soul was right." And that made me feel good.

I stayed three days. I didn't get to go to the graveyard. Our plane was due out, so as soon as the funeral was over we had to come back.

Oh, I had such a sweet child! He'd do anything in the world for me—he sure would.

I only gave him one whupping. He was staying out here at Crummies Creek with my mother. I had bought him a sled. He would go way up on the hill where the other boys went.

There was a big timber pile down there, and my mother was scared. I told him not to go there because she was afraid he might run into it and kill himself.

She told me to slip out there and watch. I didn't let him see that I was there. I had a switch with me. After he came down the hill once, I went out and whupped him with the switch. I think I broke the thing! He never did go up there any more! And that was the only whupping I ever gave him . . . that's all.

Years at work

I did lots of different kinds of work. I was driving mules for a while. Then I went to work for Harlan Funeral Home, and I stayed with them 25 years. Then they moved me from there down to their hardware store. I was with them for 35 years, and I finished up there.

I also worked in the mines for 26 years—different places. I started at a mine over around Poor Fork. I left there, and went to Lynch to work in the mines. About the time I got inside, they transferred about 100 of us. They had some mines over in Gary, West Virginia. They shipped us over there.

Well, I worked there for about two years, but then I wanted to come home. I guess I sort of told them I'd be back, but I stayed here. I wound up working in mines at Crummies Creek. They had high coal there, and low coal. When we worked out Number 3, which was the high coal, I quit.

I was with this cousin of mine in West Virginia, and I liked it just fine. He was good in the mines, but he'd go in there and get drunk. We were worried that he was going to get killed or something. He set timbers in the mine—best there ever was.

They were crazy about him. But he'd slip that stuff in his dinner bucket and get drunk. There was nothing we could do with him. They gave him three trials, but he wouldn't quit it. So they told him they just had to fire him.

I stayed there for about three more months, paying his board and mine, too. But I decided that was just too hard on me. At that time, the train was running into Middlesboro, and then on in to Harlan. We had to stop over in Middlesboro and wait for a train the next morning.

Well, this place where we went to get us a room was run by this woman named Campbell. It was an awful rough place. They killed a man when we hadn't no more than gotten upstairs. He rolled down mighty near to the bottom of the stairs, and lodged there. Then I was scared to stay at that place! We went to the depot and stayed the rest of the night.

Another time, I worked in a mine in Cumberland. I joined the union there. I stayed for a while, and they were giving everybody something but me. I was going into debt. So I just came out real honest and told them, "Now, I know where I can go and get me a job. I've stayed up here just as long as I'm going to stay. I'm gone."

They said, "Jesse, if you go, you'll be out of the union."

I said, "Well, it ain't no good to me, no way. You can just count me out."

They said, "Where are you going?"

I said, "I'm going to Hyden. You call that the scab place—well, I can get a job over there."

I went to Harlan to Mr. Gregory's music store. I said, "Mr. Gregory, I need to borrow four dollars for about two weeks. I'm going to Hyden to work, and I want to catch the bus."

He said, "Jesse, you can stay and work here."

I said, "No, I'm going to Hyden."

He said, "All right. Will you need more than that?"

I said, "No, that's plenty."

Well, I went over there and started to work for three brothers. They had about four mines. They saw that I could handle one of the mines, and they turned it over to me to run.

The boss said to the men, "I'm not going to be up here all the time, boys. What Jesse tells you, you do it. I'm turning this mine over to him."

And the boss said to me, "Jesse, I'm expecting 300 tons a day to come off this mountain."

So I said, "All right. We'll get along."

And I told the men, "I ain't no boss. I'm just a worker like you all. Anything I can jump in and help you all do, I'll do it. Let's get the 300 tons worked and get off the hill. If you get 300 tons worked by one o'clock, take your mules off to the barn."

Now one of the three brothers said, "Jesse, we're needing coal too bad for your men to be going off at one or two o'clock."

I said, "No, don't blame my men. I told them that. And if that don't suit you, I'll go tell them different."

But he said, "No, if you told them that, you go on."

I did all the buying for the ponies and mules. They didn't have anything else to use in the mines back then. Somebody had told the fellows that sold the mules, "Jesse does all the buying."

Those fellows who were selling would come to see me. They'd want me to buy something I didn't need just because I had the right.

I told them, "No, I won't do that. I don't need none, and you needn't tell me different. Now when I need them, I'll buy some. But I ain't gonna do it now."

Had an old man over there—his name was Jesse James! He let on to us that he wasn't a drinker. He was a good coal loader. Just kept on, and kept on.

One of the fellows said to me, "If you don't believe Jesse's drinking, you just come out tonight. I'll show you."

Well, I went out and I hid. And law! Jesse was as drunk as he could be!

I said to him, "Don't you tell me that you don't get drunk no more. It's all right—but you telling everybody here that you don't get drunk! You shouldn't do that."

Next thing I knew, men were coming over there from Harlan—white and black. But see, they were union men. They had to tell their buddies they were going up to Ohio to work. Then they'd catch the Greyhound bus down at Barbourville and ride over to Hyden.

I said, "If you boys had done just like I did, you wouldn't have to hide. You could just ride the bus back and forth over that mountain like I do." That place was full of men from over here.

There was a man over there—I forget his name—who tried to take me away from those men. He wanted me to go over to his mine.

But I said, "No, I don't do that. I'll stay right here."

He said, "Well, I didn't figure we could get you. But we wanted to try."

So I worked those mines out. I only got one man killed. It took about two years to get all the mining done.

A new job in Loyall

When I got home from West Virginia, I worked with Mr. Carlo Cawood hauling garbage for a while. But I told him I wanted to go to work on my own. He said, "Well, Jesse, we hate to lose you. But a man who wants to do better and go for himself—I'm for him."

I said, "Well, I'm going to have to have a truck."

He said, "We'll get you a truck. But I don't want you to jump into something where you won't make it. Let me talk to Cody Long."

Now Cody Long was a policeman down at Loyall. He'd been there for years and years. So the old man called him and said, "Do you think Jesse can make it in Loyall?"

And Cody said, "If somebody will go down there and show the people that he's going to stay with them, he could make a fortune." I could—and I did.

When I went down there I had six places where I picked up. We were there for many years, and when we left, I had 125 places. When we had decided to leave, a man came and offered to buy us all the trucks and things we would ever need if we'd stay on.

But we had been there for six years, and we were getting only one or two dollars per house. That was all right for that time, though. We were taking the garbage up on Pine Mountain and dumping it. It didn't cost us a thing.

Dirty tricks

Then I started driving a bus for Merle. He was a pretty bad fellow. Before I started, I told him, "Now, buddy, I'm not going for none of your dirty tricks. I don't play that way."

He did ask me a time or two to do some things, but I said, "I won't do it!"

His wife told him, "Merle, Jesse is the only man working for you who doesn't drink and is straight. Why don't you give him something good?"

And Merle spoke up and said, "I am!"

So he put me on the midnight run from Glenbrook to Harlan. It was pretty rough up there. You'd get some people on your bus who didn't respect women or nothin' else. I'd stop and put them off, I didn't care who they were.

I'd say, "Ain't you all got a mother?"

And they'd tell me, "Yeah." And they'd beg me to let them stay.

Well, I'd say, "One more word like that comes to me, and off you're going."

I didn't approve of it. Merle found out himself about how I didn't allow no cussin' going on in the buses.

One night late, Merle said to me, "Jesse, I want you to drive me to Cumberland."

I said, "Now, Merle, I can't be driving you everywhere and still make my run."

He said, "We'll be right back." He was going to kill a man and I didn't know it!

I drove him to Cumberland—we took his wife's Cadillac. He found out the one he was after had gone to Whitesburg, so I took him there. But he couldn't find the man. I was in the blind—I didn't know all this was going on.

When we got back, Merle's wife said, right in front of him, "Jesse, you'd better quit going with Merle. He was running last night, hunting a man to kill."

And I said, "Buddy, you'll never get me no more! You and my cousin do those tricks, but I don't. You'd better find yourself another man for that."

I told him I was going to quit, and he said, "I won't ask you no more." And he didn't.

Merle and my cousin had a deal going. They'd go gambling with a man at Lenarue. They'd take a crooked deck of cards, and just take that man's money. He owned a place out there—had a filling station. Well, he finally found out about it.

They went back out there to do him the same way again, but he knew what they were up to. He let them rake all the money up, and then he pulled a pistol on them.

He said, "Y'all get your hands up! Let that money lay right there! Get out, and don't even try to get in that car." He made them leave there walking.

He told them, "If I catch you, I'm going to kill you." And he told me he would have, too.

About halfway into town, they saw a car coming. They thought it was the man from Lenarue chasing them.

My cousin Jim said, "Come on, let's jump over this bank here. That's him!"

Merle said, "My dang feet are too sore—I can't jump here!"

Well, Jim said, "It's better to jump on your sore feet, Mr. Merle, than it is to get killed!" Then Jim said Merle pretty near turned a flip over that bank!

Yep, that man made them walk all the way into town, and leave their car there. But, you know, I can't say that I blame him.

Then Merle told me one time, "Jesse, I got some insurance that pays me $100 a day." He had some crutches like he was crippled. When he'd come to town, he'd get those crutches out. He'd hobble around town like he was in all kinds of pain. No sooner would he get back up to Ivy Hill than he'd throw those crutches aside. He was just doing that to draw his $100 a day!

Merle never did straighten up. His wife was the sweetest thing, and you know what he left her in his will? A half-pint of whiskey! His oldest boy, he left a dollar and a quarter saying, "Now I want you to take this and get you a haircut." And his baby, he gave a third of the bus line. Yes sir, that's a fact! I was right there when they got the will out of the vault.

Surprised by a goat

When I was real small, men would take wagons and haul stuff up Pine Mountain. There was a place we'd go called Pine Mountain Settlement School. I used to like to ride over with the men.

Finally I got big enough that they allowed me to drive a wagon myself. There was a real nice lady who lived right up the street. When I'd get ready to go over there, she'd always fix me a big basket of food to eat.

There was a place in Harlan called Jellico Wholesale. That's where we'd go and load up. We'd load up in the evening, and then go on over to Pine Mountain Settlement School.

When we'd go in there to eat supper, they'd set us up a glass of moonshine whiskey. Law, it like to strangled me to death until I learned what it was. I thought it was water!

They had some pet billy goats. The first night when I put my mules in the stall, I didn't know the goat was there. It had long horns, and it started butting me. It butted me right up against the barn wall, and I let out a squall! Some people had to come in and make it leave me alone.

Mr. Moneybags

At one time, this fellow was the high sheriff over near Hyden—his name was Don Hooten. Me and him took up with one another.

One weekend, we'd been to Hazard. When we came back, there was a big white fellow in town. He had these big bib overalls on. He was the drunkest man I that ever I looked at.

Don went up and said, "Old man, I'm gonna have to arrest you."

The man said, "No, you ain't gonna arrest me."

Don said, "Oh, yeah, now—I'm gonna have to do it."

Well, I jumped over behind a big brick building. I just knew there was gonna be some shooting!

He said, "No, you ain't. Wait a minute. You've got me wrong. I've got enough money to buy this town out from one end to another." He hauled out this big old flour sack he had with him. He opened that thing up and started pouring out money!

Don took him over into the office. He counted out 18 dollars for the fine, and gave the man his whiskey back. Don said it had scared him to death when the man started pouring that money out.

Don told the fellow, "I've got a cousin that runs a cab. You don't want anybody to know you've got this much money on you! Don't even tell my cousin. You get in that cab, and don't stop until you get home and put that money up someplace."

When he said he could buy the town out from one end to the other—well, he could have done it! A big old time flour sack...had it hid in the bib of his overalls.

So he got in the cab. He left out of Hyden drinking that whiskey right out of the bottle!

Mean woman blues

There was a woman up around Evarts where I used to haul things. Her name was Sherill Napier, and whoo! She was mean. That's the reason they started to run buses up there. She'd shoot at the men who tried to walk up to work. Wore two .45's!

I was scared to death to go up there. I tried to get along with her all the time.

One Sunday I was hauling a load up there with another colored fellow. She knew him, but she didn't know me.

She'd bought a pint of whiskey, and a jug of blackberry wine. Now, this blackberry wine had bugs floating on it, buddy! She told us, "Come on down out of there and have a drink. Y'all can have a drink, just like I do."

I said, "No, ma'am, I'm a Christian and I can't."

She said, "Well, you're going to break it right now." She put her hand on one of those guns.

I said, "Yes'm, I'll drink!" Man, I drank those bugs and everything! I sure did!

I used to work at night up there. I had to come down to water the mules at a water hole right by her place.

There was new man who came to work one night. I told him, "Now, when you get down the hill there, you'd better put the light out on your rig."

He said, "I ain't putting my light out."

I said, "Well, all right, then, don't put it out."

She saw him and hollered, "Put that dang light out!"

But he didn't put it out.

KER-POW! She shot at him! Man, he threw that light! I jumped out of the water there, and got over a little fence rail. I got the mules headed downhill. Then I got down and started to crawl along. She was still shooting to beat the band!

Here came the man crawling toward me. I'd tried to warn him! He was scared to death. "Oh, Lordy! Oh, Lordy!" he said.

When the law was gonna arrest her, they'd go to her back. They'd never go out to her face.

Finally, she changed all her mean ways, she got married and tried the Lord. She told me, "Jesse, I've quit all that."

I said, "I'm so glad, I don't know what to do. Man, you were wild!"

She said, "I found out that wasn't no life to live."

I said, "No, it wasn't—everybody was scared of you. I didn't think you'd live this long."

But the last I know of, she died a natural death.

In Bloody Breathitt

I was driving a truck for a while for Harlan Fruit Company. I'd deliver in Hazard, and then go on through to Cincinnati.

One night I stopped in Jackson—Bloody Breathitt they called it. They didn't allow colored there. This one old colored man was there, but he'd been raised there.

I was sitting in the diner talking. I saw that this one man had a pistol on. I kept looking to see whether I could see a badge. Never could see nary. I was watching what I drank. I'd never get drunk—didn't want to wreck the truck.

Finally I nerved up. I said, "Now, don't think I'm smart or nothing, but are you an officer?"

He said, "No."

I said, "Well, I've been looking to see if you got a badge."

And he said, "No, I ain't got nary badge."

I'd no more got through saying that, until a man walked through the door. He never said a word except for, "Be ready when I come back!"

It sounded like a joke to me. I just sat there. But sure enough, in five minutes, here came that man. He had two pistols, and there was the other man with one on. Lord have mercy! The bullets started flying!

I jumped head-first right over the counter. One man fell to left, one to the right, and another fellow fell right across the door.

I came back over the counter, and said, "Lord, I've got to get out of here!"

Somebody said, "Go on, man—this ain't nothin'."

I got over to the man who was crossways at the door. There were three concrete steps there. Well, I never took the time. I jumped over that man and hit on the street! I took off running right past my truck. It was parked right across the street from the diner.

I saw a man standing there and said, "Buddy, I'll give you five dollars to go down and drive that truck up here. Two men just killed each other down there!"

He said, "Man, keep your five dollars. I'll walk down there with you to get your truck."

We walked to the truck, and I got in it. You bet old Jesse never stopped there no more! Not me, buddy. No way. I went on through that place.

There's a man that devils me now every time he sees me. "Hey, Jesse," he'll say, "When you been to Jackson?"

I'll say, "Buddy, I ain't been there, and I ain't going!"

Trouble on the highway

One time when I was driving to Cincinnati, there was a real big load. There was more stuff to go than one truck could carry. So this man who lived here asked me to see if my boss would let him take another truck and go with me.

He lived here in town, had a nice wife and children. But there was this girl he was going with over in Hazard. He'd get around her, and he'd just go crazy. She was really good-for-nothing. Just took him for every penny he'd spend on her.

I said, "Now, Albert, I know when we get over to Hazard, you're going to call that woman."

She lived right on the main road, just as you came around this curve. Well, I was in front of him, but I kept looking back through my side glass, and saw him slowing down.

He said, "Jesse, will it be all right?"

I said, "Well, I figure you're going to take her, anyway. Know when to stop, buddy."

Well, he got her in the truck. And he was fool enough to let her keep telling him to drink whiskey.

These were great big four-ton trucks we were driving. Great big trucks! Well, he got about half drunk, and she did, too. She told him to let her drive the truck. But she couldn't drive! They side-swiped a car, but I didn't know anything about it. They'd gotten ahead of me, and I only saw them once in a while.

There was a place in Georgetown where we always stopped to gas up. Just the other side of Lexington. When I got there, a state trooper drove up, flashing those lights.

He said, "Let's see your driver's license. Which one of your trucks side-swiped that car and kept going?"

I said, "Not me—I ain't side-swiped nobody!" Well, I had drunk a beer or two and I was puffing on a cigar so he couldn't tell. Man, I was puffing that cigar!

It was about midnight then. I said, "I'll have to call the boss. He lives in Evarts. I'll reverse the charges."

Well, the state police listened at me. I got hold of the boss and said, "Albert's done acted a fool. He side-swiped somebody's car, I don't know whose. I didn't know he did it."

The boss said, "Let me talk to the state police."

So the police got on the phone, and the boss said, "Now, you find out whose car got hit. Tell them not to worry about it—it will be fixed."

And the trooper said "All right."

Then the boss said, "Now anything Jesse tells you, it's just that way. Yeah, he'll take a drink. But he's up all hours. He's the only one who has any sense, and doesn't wreck my trucks."

Well, the police came back out, and said, "What do you think I should do with Albert? Your boss said he's given him so much trouble I should jack the jail up and set it down on him. But then, what can we do with her?"

I said, "I don't care what you do with her. The best thing would be to put her in your car and take her back to the bus station in Lexington. Put her on the bus there and send her back to Hazard. That's all I know to do with her. "

The trooper said, "You know, Jesse, I thought you'd had a drink or two. But I'll tell you one thing—your boss sure is crazy about you!"

Cut along dotted line.

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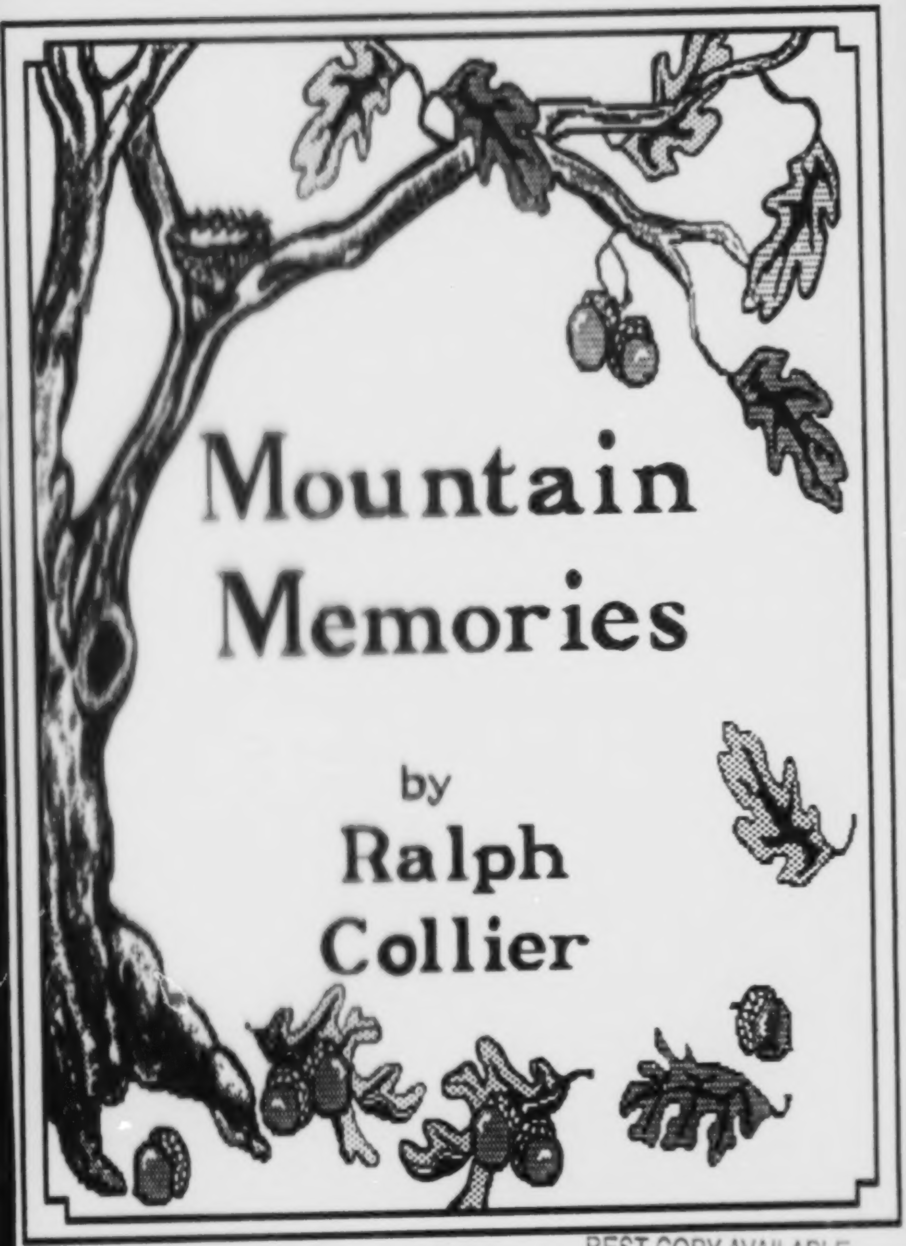

Mountain Memories

by

Ralph Collier

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Mountain Memories

by
Ralph
Collier

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

"Things are really different now than they used to be. When I was growing up at the foot of Pine Mountain, in Eolia, we never owned an automobile. Everything we ate came out of the garden."

In this series of stories Ralph Collier tells us about growing up in Letcher County, Kentucky, during the Fifties and Sixties.

"Back when we were kids, everybody helped each other. All the neighbors helped each other. They'd show up and we'd sit on the porch half the night just stringing beans."

We are very happy, and very lucky that we can give these stories to you as a booklet. All the stories are true. We hope you like them.

Carol Warren
Todd Garland

A note to the tutor:

Two years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the second in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was compiled from a series of oral interviews with Ralph Collier from Eolia, Kentucky. Ralph is glad these stories will be used by reading students. He wants you to know that all these stories are true.

This booklet has been written at Grade 3 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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For information address:
Harlan County Library Literacy Project
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Cumberland, Kentucky 40823

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My first memory was a thing that kind of made Daddy mad, a little bit. We had a six-legged chicken. A six-legged chicken! We honestly had that thing. Randy Scott was chasing it, and he got it caught in a fence, and he killed it. That chicken was something to see. It sure was. It was a six-legged chicken. I'm not sure if all the legs were touching the ground. And it wasn't big enough to eat. It was just a young chicken—not even half-grown.

My daddy got mad over that. He wanted that chicken kept alive. I'm sure it would have been worth something to show people. But Daddy would never have sold it.

Growing Up At The Foot Of Pine Mountain

I was born in 1946—the first of the kids to be born in the house at Eolia, where my brother, Doyle, lives now. I was about the middle child in the family. The older kids were born over on Smoot Creek, on the other side of Whitesburg. There were thirteen of us in our family.

There would have been fifteen, but Mommy lost two. All of Mommy's kids were born at home, except Doyle. He was born in the hospital. My mom's aunt was our mid-wife. Mommy called her a granny-lady. Mommy and Daddy never went to the doctor for anything.

Things are really different now than they used to be. When I was growing up at the foot of Pine Mountain, in Eolia, we never owned an automobile. And everything we ate came out of the garden. My dad, his name was Hobert, had to make sure that we had enough stuff for us in the wintertime. He'd leave at four o'clock in the morning, work all day, and come back at eleven o'clock at night.

Daddy was born in 1910. He started working the coal mines in 1928. He only got forty-five cents an hour. He never had a job that was very close to home. And he didn't have a car, so he couldn't drive to work. He would walk from Eolia to Pound, Virginia. Or else he would try to hitch a ride. But when he started working in the mines there weren't too many cars. So he didn't have much of a way to get to the mines, other than walking.

My dad worked 27 years in the coal mines, and he only missed three days of work. All of his life he had epilepsy, and one time when he was in the mines he had a seizure. So they wouldn't let him go back in any more. That's the only reason he quit. The most he ever made in the mines was eight dollars a day. That was in 1955 or 1956.

Daddy worked for the WPA, too. They were cleaning up the side of the road—cutting trees and things. He had a rock roll down over him, and it busted his shoulder. He got covered up, but they had a big crew. So they dug Daddy out.

Daddy's family had sixteen kids—eight girls and eight boys. Daddy's parents, Martha and Jim Collier, lived in the house across the street from ours. That's where Daddy was born. He stayed right there in Eolia all of his life.

Born In A Covered Wagon

Mommy, whose name was Clara, was born in 1909. She would always do whatever she could to take care of the kids. Mommy had a whole lot to do, because she always had a houseful of small kids. I don't know how she found the time to care for the children. But she always did. She could sew, but she wasn't really that good at it. If you got a hole in something she would put a patch on it, and you'd wear it.

Mommy was born in White Oak, Missouri. There were twelve kids in her family. Her parents, Leslie and Alice Brown, lived in Texas before Mommy was born. They traveled from Texas to Kentucky several times. It was a three month trip, one way. Mommy was born in a covered wagon—on one of the trips from Texas to Kentucky. They settled in Premium. We call it Kingdom Come.

Papaw and Mamaw had a house in Premium for a long time, but it burned down. So they came to live with Mommy and Daddy. Daddy cut down trees and took them to our uncle who ran the sawmill. Our uncle sawed the trees into boards. Daddy used those boards to build a new house for Mommy's parents. After a while, Papaw and Mamaw went back to Texas. They still had three daughters there.

Mommy used the kind of iron that you heated over the stove. She didn't have a lot of time for ironing things. We learned to put our school clothes under our mattresses at night. That would take a lot of the wrinkles out. Everybody helped out. But it seemed that everybody wanted to do everything but wash dishes. When we came home from the fields, dinner would be ready. Or if we were too far away, Mommy would make dinner and carry it to us. She was a sweet old lady.

We never went to the store to buy anything—maybe every now and then a box of salt or a bag of flour. We killed hogs and made our own lard. We took our corn to the mill and had it ground. Mommy always had coffee, but she'd buy the beans and then grind them in her coffee grinder. We hardly bought anything.

Everybody Helped

Back when we were kids everybody helped each other. I mean all the neighbors helped each other. We'd go pick beans. We'd get four or five bushels of beans, and we would set them up on the porch. Then we'd go around and tell the neighbors that we were going to have a bean-stringing. They would show up and be there half the night, just stringing beans. The next time somebody else would have a peach-peeling. We would go to their house and help them peel peaches.

My dad didn't believe in spending money at the store. We killed four or five hogs every year. We milked two cows just about every day, to keep enough milk for the family. Before we went to school, we had to walk around to Iona Scott's to milk the cow. That was a good half-mile walk. Then we'd come back home and get ready to go to school. Whenever we had the cow around the house, Mommy would milk her. But if we had to go walking, it was either me or Rosie. Curt would go milk, too.

We'd get up at four o'clock in the morning, go feed the hogs, feed the cow, the mule. Then we'd come back in and wash, and clean up and get ready to go to school.

After we got out of grade school, Daddy wanted us to help him work the fields. When I was nine years old, I took the mule and plow and went to the fields. I plowed the fields just like the grownups. But I liked going to school around here. I was the first one in the family who got to go to high school. I was the first one to graduate the eighth grade. I was proud of that. I use to tell Mommy and Daddy that some day I was going to be President.

Daddy threw all kinds of fits when I went to high school. I was the only one at home who could plow. So he had to take the mule again and start plowing, and he didn't like that. But Mom told him that I was going. When I grew up, I just decided I'd had all the farm work I wanted. So, I left here. I was seventeen when I left, but by that time I was just tired of it. I didn't want any more of it.

When we were kids, we did have some time for playing. And we never had to go play without our father. Never without our father. If he had time to play, he would always play with us. He could outrun any of us. He could throw rocks better than you could shoot a gun. He'd throw green apples or corncobs at us, buddy, and he'd burn blisters.

We used to have to climb up on the house to get away from him. Daddy would come up behind us, but by the time he got up there, we had jumped off the other side. Whenever he was chasing us, he could outrun any of us. So we had to do something to get away from him.

Lord yes, it was lots of fun playing with Daddy. He played tag, or hide-and-go-seek. If you wanted to have a corncob fight, he'd have a corncob fight. He knew he was going to win that one. You'd have to go run and get behind the car, or get behind the corner, or something.

If he threw one at you, you were getting hit with it. But Daddy never played to really hurt us. He was the kind of man whose word was as good as gold, if he told you anything. He never had any enemies, as I know of.

He could hit a ball farther with one hand than we could with two hands. He'd just take a broomstick and hold it with one hand. Then he could knock a ball over to the other end of the garden. He could. He never used two hands to hit a ball.

We used to have every kid in the neighborhood at our house. They came over just to play with Daddy. That's the only reason they came over. If the neighborhood kids couldn't get in a horseshoe game with him, they'd start throwing corncobs at him. But he never tried to hurt the kids. He'd just have a nice, clean, fun game. But if he hit you with a corncob, he'd make you rub a while.

When we were kids, somehow we always had enough time to pitch horseshoes. Pitching horseshoes was something that, if you were a country boy, you just did. My dad was good. My uncle was the best. My brother A.J. and I got as good as they were. But by the time we got that good, they were gone, or too old to do as well as they used to do.

We used to get into fights over the horseshoe games. The kids would get out there and get to fighting. The one who was the best either had to get a whipping, or let the other guys win. It was a hard decision. But no one was hurt bad.

Well, one time, I did hurt a boy. We were playing Cowboys and Indians, and I threw an arrow, and I hit him in the eye. I did hurt him. I hurt him bad. We were throwing those big, long horse weeds. We did it all the time, and I hit him in the eye with one. But it was an accident.

In And Out Of The Hospital

We had a lot of sickness in our family. When I was nine years old I had the measles. I went to the hospital, but all I had was the measles. I came back out and I got the mumps. And after the mumps, I had a problem. I couldn't make water. I swelled up so big I had to wear my sister's dress to the hospital.

When I went into the hospital for the operation to help me, I got into a fight. It was terrible. I got into a fight in the hospital. I did—with a nurse! She knew I was scared of false teeth, and she spit her false teeth at me. And I hit that woman. Oh yeah.

She did it for a joke. She was teasing me. But Lord I hit that woman. I mean, hard as a nine-year-old could hit someone. She started hollering, "Lord, I was just playing. I was just playing." I scared her and I scared me, too. But false teeth don't bother me now.

I don't know why false teeth scared me. I was just nine years old. I could see the false teeth outside of someone's mouth, and they scared me. Mommy had false teeth all my life, and she knew they scared me. My mother had joked with the nurse about it. The nurse just wanted to play a prank on me that day. I guess she didn't want to tell anybody about it. I never did get into any trouble over it.

A Lot Of Sickness

I was in the hospital four months out of the school year, that year. They wrote to me and said I had missed too much school to go on to the fifth grade. So I had to take the fourth grade all over again. Out of the whole year, I probably went to school only two months. I had a lot more wrong with me, but I don't exactly remember. Like I said, I was only nine.

I had one baby brother who died when he was about eight days old. Way back then, they didn't have any way to find out what was wrong with him. I had one brother who got killed when he was eighteen months old. I don't know the story exactly. I think one of my daddy's brothers dropped him off of his shoulder. Another brother was 21 years old, and he only weighed 51 pounds. He was born with what they called a chronic heart ailment. He had TB all his life, too. So he never did grow.

Mommy and Daddy didn't make him work. But he could shoot a gun as well as anybody could. He'd have his dog, and he'd have his gun. He would set matches in a fence post. Then he'd take that gun and strike those matches by shooting that gun. He could—I've seen him. People say you can't kill a humming bird. My brother could take a .22 rifle and shoot a humming bird. He had good eyes.

He had a good dog, too. We always had to chase the chickens. So he taught his dog to chase the chickens for us. We could start running after one chicken. And we'd have a hundred of them out there that looked the same. But the one we first put the dog on is the one that dog would catch. It must have been the scent of the chicken, or something.

Snakes

My mom and dad used to have what they called shuck beds. They'd take corn shucks and sew them in a tick. Mommy always had her kids at home. When her second child, Jimmy, was being born, she was laying in bed. All at once she told her granny-lady, "Get me out of this bed."

But her granny-lady told her that it was too late. She would have to go ahead and have the baby. Sure enough, after she had the baby, she said, "Now get me out of this bed." They got her out of the bed and she said, "Now you can take that shuck bed outside."

When they took it outside they found a big blacksnake inside the bed. The midwife told Mommy there was an old saying. "If a child is born on a snake, it will get shot." She told Mommy that. Sure enough, my brother, Jimmy, did get shot when he died. He was 31 years old. Way back then that woman told Mommy that. Mommy had a nervous breakdown over that.

We had two dens of copperheads right on our property. We always had a lot of copperheads around there. We burnt them out one year. Five years later we had another den, right in the same stump. That stump was five feet across. I guess there must have been hundreds of copperheads in that old, rotten stump by the outhouse.

We always had trouble with snakes while they were there. We finally burnt up the whole stump. When Daddy found out there were so many snakes, he knew how to get rid of them. I don't know how Daddy got close enough to them to start a fire. But he burnt that stump. I reckon that took care of those copperheads.

Dan

We had a mule when we were growing up—his name was Dan. All the money we had came from working that mule. Daddy or I would take him and go plow. And we'd log. We could go to the backside of the mountain, hook the logs up to the back of the mule and just turn him loose. Dan would go back to the place in the road where we started. Somebody down there would unhook Dan, turn him loose, and he'd come right back up to us.

Dan was the best mule who ever lived. The smallest kid in the family could lead that mule all the way around the yard. We got pictures around the house where you could see twelve or thirteen of us kids on that mule's back. Why, you could take him in the house. You could take him anywhere you wanted to. My brother Curt took him right into the house. Where Doyle's bedroom is now. Curt led Dan through that room and out the back door. Daddy and Mommy weren't home. But if we had broken the floor through, Daddy would have found out.

Uncle Rand

There used to be a lot of fish in the Cumberland River. Daddy and the rest of us would go fishing when we had time. We used to catch fish two or three feet long. We had a big swimming hole called the Slick Rock. We didn't need a diving board there, because there was this big rock. We got out there and we just dived off that. And we had the old mill pond—where there used to be a mill that would grind corn. Now, we did have to build a diving board there.

The mill was right in Eolia. It was down the hill from where the cemetery is now. You had to go down a dirt road to get there. My Uncle owned the mill, and he would grind the corn. We'd take a bushel of corn, and he'd grind the corn for us. All he would take out for himself was one gallon. Sometimes we would have three or four bushels ground at the same time. The mill ran by water. My Uncle had the water dammed up. Whenever he wanted to grind corn, he'd open the gate, and let the water through. That would make the mill wheel turn the grinder.

We never had a way to make flour. We had to buy that at the store. But we got a lot of flour with the commodities. So whether we liked it or not, we had to eat it.

We all liked Uncle Rand. Mommy and Daddy raised him. After his mom died he came to live with Mommy and Daddy. He was more like a brother to us than an Uncle. He was the one we played horseshoes with. After he moved away and got married he'd come to our house every two or three weeks. He'd be sitting around, and he'd say, "Hey Hobe, let's have a midnight supper."

My Daddy would just shake his head and say, "No. We're not having a midnight supper."

But it was too late. We had already grabbed a kettle of water and put it on the stove. Uncle Rand would go get Daddy's chicken. Daddy always had a rooster that he thought was just a seed rooster. We were supposed to keep that one. Every time Uncle Rand would come over he would want to kill Daddy's rooster. Daddy would cut up and shine, but he wasn't really mad. Sure enough, a midnight supper was coming on.

A Flood For Christmas

1957 was the first year we got anything for Christmas, other than a pair of socks. Some of my brothers and sisters had gone to Chicago to find jobs. They brought back a whole truck load of things from up there. We got things that we needed and things that we didn't need, for the first time in our lives.

January 27, after that Christmas, a flood came through the house. The water came in over top of the beds. A log was washed in that barely fit through the window. That flood destroyed everything we got for Christmas. We had some little bunny rabbits hanging on the wall, and maybe the water didn't get them. It took the deep freeze in our house and washed it from one side of the house to the other. The water came over the top of the stove, the tables, the beds.

I remember that morning because it was one of the few times we had cornflakes for breakfast. We had a whole dish pan of cornflakes. We were in the house and we heard something on the back porch.

We opened the back door and there was the water. It started coming in. We got everybody up who was still in bed. We had to carry the younger kids out. I remember carrying two of them out myself. Iona started crying, "I want my cornflakes." She was only four years old.

We went across the street and waited for the water to go down. Mommy and Daddy had to send us to stay with some of our people. We were gone for about three weeks and went to school where they lived. Still, we had to come back and help clean the house. That was three weeks of steady work. The worst part was shoveling six inches of mud out of the house. There were a lot of things that were destroyed. You couldn't do anything with them. The Red Cross helped a lot. They brought a whole truckload of furniture and materials to fix the house.

That year the water came in so fast, we didn't have time to get the mule out of the barn. We were all crying, "We want Dan. We want Dan."

My uncle said, "Well, I'll go get him." He swam from the porch on this side of the road over to roof of our house. He got on top of it to rest for awhile. Then he jumped off the back of the house and made it to the barn. He unlocked that door and let the mule out. Our uncle took his life in his hands to do that. The mule was a dear friend. Everybody loved him.

We had a hog that had fourteen pigs that night. All of the pigs were drowned, but the hog was still in her pen when the water went down. She was still alive. She had probably stood on her back feet to keep her nose our of the water. We had another hog that got washed away. A couple days later some man down the road came by the house and said, "Hobert, I got your hog down at my place. You want to come get it?" It had been washed a mile down the river. That hog was still alive, too.

Another flood came through in 1963. We only got a foot of water in the house that time. Still we had to do the same cleaning. The last flood we had was in 1972. It destroyed everything we had. I wasn't at home then—I was in Chicago. All of us who were living in Chicago came back to help Mommy and Daddy with the house.

My Car (Daddy's Car)

We never owned a car until I was sixteen years old. I had a license, but I didn't have a car. My daddy bought one up in Chicago and brought it back down here, when I was sixteen. It was a 1955 Ford. He let me keep it for about a year.

I was in the band then. I started out playing drums, and then my band director found out I was a really strong boy. So he talked me into playing the tuba. That thing weighed 32 pounds. When I was in the band we won a lot of first place trophies. We went to the Kentucky Derby in Louisville for three years in a row.

So, anyway, I had to take the car to school so I could get home from band practice afterwards. One day I was going from the ball field back to the school, and I wrecked that car. I totalled it. I waited for the police. But my Daddy didn't have any way to get from Eolia over to Whitesburg. So by the time he did get there, the police were gone and everything was taken care of. I had left, too.

He couldn't find me anywhere. He knew where the wreck was supposed to be, but he couldn't find me. He went to the courthouse and asked if anybody knew where I was. They told Daddy they didn't know.

I was hiding! I was afraid that Daddy was going to kill me over wrecking that car. My dad was the kind of man who always said, "Don't destroy anything that costs money to put back. If it costs you money to fix it, don't destroy it." If we did destroy something that cost money, we got spanked for it. Finally, I got up enough nerve to come out when I saw him. My dad just put his arms around me and he said, "Son, are you all right?"

Here I was scared of my daddy, and all he wanted to know was if I was all right. I said, "Yeah, but I wrecked your car."

He said, "Don't worry about the car. We can get another one. It's only metal."

Martha

I wasn't grown up when I got out of high school, but I had a girlfriend, Martha. She was a freshman when I was a senior. I got out of school and we decided we were going to get married. I married a fourteen-year-old girl. It lasted a week. She said the only reason she got married was so she could get away from home. I think it was as much a surprise to her as it was to me. After she got her step-dad and mom to sign for her so she could get married, she figured she was free. She could go do what she wanted.

I was driving the RC bottling company truck. When I came home that evening, they told me that she had left. It was the first time I ever did any drinking to amount to anything. Her brother and I went down to Vicco and we got a six-pack of beer. He drank three and I drank three. I think that's the most I ever drank at one time.

I kept waiting for things to change. But Mommy knew I had to get on with my life. She talked me into going up to the courthouse and getting it dissolved. I had waited a little too long to get the marriage annulled. So I had to get a divorce instead. I left here and went on to Chicago.

I went to live with my brother in Chicago. I got a job working for Zenith Radio, making TVs for two years. When I was driving the RC truck in Eolia I was making about forty-six dollars a week. In Chicago, I could make about ninety dollars a week, working for Zenith in 1966. I thought I was rich!

Then I got an offer to work in road construction. I had never done it before, but I knew I could work. The foreman used to get mad at me because I didn't know how to do anything. But one of the machine operators would tell the foreman, "Don't worry about this kid. At least he'll work. We'll teach him what to do. But we'll get some work out of him." He taught me everything I needed to know. The following season, our foreman had a heart attack. He was in the hospital. You know what? They put me on as foreman. I only had about four months experience by that time. And I got to be the foreman until he got back from the hospital. I worked for them for 15 years.

When I started with them, they were paying three-and-a-half or four dollars an hour. My first check from road construction was about $350. Now I really was rich! I met Goldie and we got married in 1967. The next year we came back through Eolia. We bought a 14-acre farm with two houses on it while we were here. We never did live in it. I had my family up in Chicago, and I was making too much money up there to move back. I suppose I bought that place just to show everybody back home that I could.

Two years later, we bought a house up in Crystal Lake, which is about 50 miles from Chicago. We lived there for 20 years. We had three kids—Rhonda, Vickie, and about eight years later we had Ralph. Their school colors were orange and black. Those were my school colors, too, and my favorite ones.

A couple years after Goldie and I were divorced I called up Martha, my first wife. Well, first of all, I got Mommy to get her phone number for me. Martha had gotten married again, too. Her husband died about eight years before this. I called her up and told her what had happened. I remember asking her if she had a shoulder I could cry on. She said, "I sure do, any time you want." She told me then she had waited all these years for me to come back. I'm not sure I believe that.

While I was still in Crystal Lake I made plans for us to go to the Grand Ole Opry. I asked Martha if she wanted to go. She said, "You get the tickets and let me know how much they are. I'll pay for mine." It was a great weekend. We sure enjoyed it. We got to be together for most of the next year.

About six months after we went to the Grand Ole Opry, Martha started saying that her back was hurting. The doctors said it was this and that and the other. She just kept getting sicker. They finally took x-rays and saw there was something in her. They wanted to operate. When they cut her open they found cancer. She probably lived for only four months after that.

She was in and out of hospitals in Hazard and Whitesburg. She had cobalt treatments, but she said they made her sicker than she already was. She was getting really bad when I got a call from my brother. He told me, "Ralph, Martha's in the Hazard hospital, and she's just calling your name."

I got over there some way. I walked in her room, and she just smiled and said, "I see you made it." You wouldn't think anybody that sick could talk.

I said to her, "They tell me that you've been hollering for me."

She looked at me and said, "Will you just hug me?"

I hugged her. I sat there and held her for a long time. And about twenty minutes later she passed away in my arms.

Cut along dotted line

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you?

Is the book easy to understand?

Are the directions easy to understand?

Are there words in the book you do not know?

Are there words in the book you do not use?

What do you like about the book?

What do you not like about the book?

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In Honor Of The Old Folks

by Hiram Day and Mae Hensley

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

In Honor Of the Old Folks

by
Hiram Day
and
Mae Hensley

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

"When I was growing up, it was as important to know how to preserve your food as it was to grow it.

Back then, we didn't have a big deep freeze to put our meat in. We had to wait until the weather got cold. When it got cold and snowy, like maybe in December, people knew it was getting to be time to kill their hogs."

In this booklet, Hiram and Mae tell us how life use to be on Cranks Creek, in Harlan County, Kentucky. Hiram and Mae hope these true stories will honor the old folks of Cranks Creek, and help memories of them to live on.

Carol Warren
Todd Garland

A note to the tutor:

Two years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the first in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was developed from oral stories told to us by Hiram Day and Mae Hensley—students of the Harlan County Literacy program. Hiram and Mae want you to know that all these stories are true, and they are happy that their stories will be used by other reading students.

This booklet has been written at Grade 4 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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For information address:
Harlan County Library Literacy Project
306 Central Street
Cumberland, Kentucky 40823

This book is dedicated to—
the Days, the Garetts, the Grubbs,
the Halls and the Sargents—

all of those who came before us
and all of those who come after us.

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Hiram's Stories

On Cranks Creek

We were born and raised over in the Noah Branch. It's called the Barn Branch now—that's what they first called it.

My brother, Noah, who lives at the mouth of the holler now, was named after my grandfather. They called it the Noah Hall holler because grandpa was born and raised there as far as I know. Noah and Becky Hall lived there during their lifetime, down here at the foot of Crummies Mountain.

Both of my grandmas were named Becky. Noah and Becky Sargent Hall raised five children, the best I can remember. They were raised there in the Noah Holler. They grew up there, and then Mother after them. Mother was born and raised there, and then she moved out in about 1971.

Now grandma and grandpa were in that Noah Branch a hundred years ago, I guess. The land was passed down through the family. Grandpa and Grandma and some of the old folks are buried up there at the foot of the hill above where they're mining now. That's why we've been trying to protect that graveyard up there. Mom's sister is buried there, too.

Things aren't like they used to be. It used to be that if there was vacant land, sometimes people would just move in on it. And if nobody bothered them for seven years, that piece of land would be theirs.

Of course, these folks didn't really own it legally. Mommy had to move out around 1971. The coal company still claimed to have papers showing they owned it.

My other grandma and grandpa lived in the head of this holler up here. They used to own from up here around the Coffee Branch to somewhere over around Betsy Top. They were named Hiram and Becky Day.

That's the reason they named this holler Day's Branch. I never did see my grandpa on my daddy's side. But as far as I know, they all lived here, one after another. They mostly lived off the land—farmed and that kind of thing.

Wagons

I guess a few cars had been made at that time, but not many people had them. I can remember when they didn't have much but wagons. They thought it was the World's Fair when somebody would come through with a horse and wagon. A man would have maybe two or three children and his wife riding with him.

I've ridden out of this holler when the ice was so thick we brought a team of mules and a wagon over this creek. There were four of us in the wagon, but we never broke the ice.

Back then, the road was the creek bed. You'd turn off out here where Route 568 is now, and just come up the creek. Then to get to Grandma and Grandpa's you'd kind of go up to the right. It was road mostly for walking.

Living Off The Land

All these were families that lived off the land. It was company land. Mostly, that was how they survived. People had their living, and mostly raised what they ate, like milk, or taters or beans. They made molasses, and put up enough beans to last the winter.

That's how they lived back in those days. If things were like they are now, they couldn't have lived at all. Back in those days they spent their money wisely. They didn't go out and spend everything they had in one place. They knew better than to do that. They didn't have that much money to deal with. But they'd make it go a long way. They'd only buy things that they couldn't grow—coffee and things like that. Sometimes they would run out of grease, but most likely they had their own from their pigs.

When I was growing up, it was as important to know how to preserve your food as it was to grow it. Back then, we didn't have a big deep freeze to put our meat in. We had to wait until the weather got cold. When it got cold and snowy, like maybe in December, people knew it was getting to be time to kill their hogs.

They'd build an outside building, called the smokehouse. Sometimes they would set up a barrel in there and build a fire in it. They'd use different kinds of wood in it, and smoke their meat. Smoking will keep your meat just about like putting salt in it. It will dry the meat out.

If you wanted to keep a ham or shoulder over the winter, you'd cure it with salt.You'd slit it down to the bone in several places and put salt in there. You don't need to use a whole lot. Just a thin coating of salt will do the job.

Then the weather will begin to dry your meat out, just like it would dry out corn. Until the weather was right for harvesting your corn, you didn't do it, or it would still be sappy. And it's the same way with your meat. If you didn't put it out where it would go through a good hard freezing, it would stay kind of puffy and not dry out. Then it would spoil. So you see, they preserved it by the cold weather.

But winters are not like they used to be. The old folks could tell you how to preserve the meat, and they knew what to do. If the weather didn't bring on enough cold to secure that meat, they had another way of doing it. They would smoke it and dry it out. They'd sling the meat over that barrel with the fire in it, and dry it out that way. You've seen things in the store that say "hickory smoked." Well, that's the reason for that - they would use hickory wood in the fire while they smoked the meat.

When they got through with that meat, it would be fixed so that it didn't need any refrigeration whatever. Either by smoking it, or putting it through a hard freeze, that meat would be dried out. Then no matter how hot the days got later, the meat would not spoil. Once it was cured, they could just take it out and put it in the store house until they needed it.

All Kinds Of Work

Now when I was growing up,it was about the time Hoover was president. Times were hard then. Daddy worked for a dollar and a half a day, when he could get it. You can figure what that would buy for a family of five. Well, really there were just four until Annie came along—she was the baby.

When I was growing up, everybody worked. We had to, to get by. Unless one was down sick or something, we all worked. Whichever was the oldest would probably be the one who plowed. Noah was the oldest, so he'd plow, and the rest of us would hoe.

Daddy mostly worked at the mill when he could, as a timber man. We would all work at farming, and he would help when he had time. The younger children would hoe or drop corn or something they could do. That was the way we all carried it out.

Some days we might be putting fertilizer on the garden. There was a lot of work to go around. You didn't go to the farm supply and buy fertilizer. You used your own. It was all part of the process—people's way of farming.

Then when it came to be fall, you had to gather the things you'd grown. Another thing you had to do was to put up some wood for the winter, for heat. All these things are good to know for survival.

Later on, Daddy worked with the L.P. Johnson Coal Company. They had an office over here at Crummies, and were sawmilling in the holler. Daddy was working in the sawmill. He started out at a dollar and half a day. On up through the years, he got to eight dollars a day. That is what he was making when he got hurt.

Daddy got hurt when he was 61 years old. I was born in 1936, and I was about 17 when he got hurt. I think that was about 1953. So Daddy had been on that job nearly all his life—maybe sixteen or seventeen years. The company had changed hands a time or two, but it was still the same job.

Taking Care of What We Have

In that holler there, it was a big thing when the wood was destroyed. They came in and mined the coal, but they disturbed the wood. That tore up the farms. And it ruined all the water system. They had two springs in the holler that kept the whole holler in water.

All of that was part of the reason that people had to move out. Well, there were no reads, either. But the company wanted them to leave, too, so they could go ahead and do whatever they wanted with the rest of the land. But the family was here for a long time.

I heard one man tell that they found a grave up in the holler with stones marking it, and nobody knew who was buried there. A lot of things went on in these parts in the old days. Like that story they tell on TV, life goes on. No matter how hard, or how bad, or how poor you are, it goes on. You find a way. And that's how they survived.

Nowadays, I think that something that's been passed down from your grandpas and grandmas and other old folks ought to be kept in the family. Look at all this mountain forest that Grandma and Grandpa Day kept up until their dying day.

They weren't only providing a way for themselves to live. I mean, look at what else was at stake when this kind of thing was destroyed. It put all the groundhogs and coons and squirrels out of a place to eat. The water was sure to be ruined. There's a lot at stake, if people would give it some thought, isn't there?

Now I got married back in 1957. My wife's grandpa was a Daniels. The two of us sat down to talk, and he said to me, "Son, it ain't what you make that's going to get you by in life. It's how you take care of it." And I agree with him. If you don't spend your money wisely, you may need something before payday and not have any way to get it.

Now, I think everybody ought to come to a standstill and study about what they're doing before they give away these places that the old folks went through the rough and toughs to keep. They shouldn't let something come in and just destroy all the wild and the world of creation that God gave us. We don't need that to be done. That is something that the Lord gave people to live with. And that is the way it ought to be used.

Thinking About The Future

A lot of people will say, "Easy come, easy go." But you can save what has been passed down to you. We had 105 acres up here. My daddy and his folks could have put their minds to doing something with it besides selling it. And just look what that would have done for the rest of family in the later years.

Well, it may have been "easy come, easy go" to some of them, I guess. Daddy had put some work into that land because he grew up there—he and Uncle Bill Napier. But the thing of it is, it wasn't really that "easy" because those old folks had sweated for what they had. See, there is a lot at stake when we let something like that go, because once gone, it's gone for good.

We should be looking at the land over a period of time. If we just go in and demolish everything, that's a real hurt to our children for the sake of a little money right now.

All that wood was destroyed . . . and only a few people made a bit of money. Then when the money is made, when it's all said and done, there's no way to put anything back into the land.

Really you're bringing everything to a dead end. So you've got a job for maybe two years, and then the next years that the future brings there's no land for people to work. We ought to remember that we have young children or grandchildren growing up. What I have today I'll hand down to my family and hope they use it wisely. Now that's the kind of thing that would help keep this world going, isn't it?

I think people are actually hurting themselves more than any gain they get. If they take everything out of the land unwisely, then nobody else can use it later. Like, on that mountain where we grew up, two springs got ruined from the mining. Just look what that would be worth to families for water now.

Why, there was the Jones family, Green Garrett's family, Johnny and Polly Day's family, Uncle Plenty and Lurie Hall's, Joe Hensley, and Morty Hensley, and their families. Now, I don't know how many families that I've called off there—all of them got water from those two springs.

There'd be no water at all in there now, except what would be unfit to drink. Something like that you can't replace, and it ought to be against the law to destroy it. You see, other people have got to use that.

We need to teach these younger children who are growing up to use their resources wisely. The things we have will go out soon enough, even if we do the best we can. All this good coal and stuff has about been mined out up in here. There aren't many more resources to rely on. So, what are people going to think to do when all the coal is gone? Mining has destroyed the greatest portion of the things people could have made a living with.

All this is farm land here—but you don't see many people farming or trying to raise anything. That's because they know they can get what they want at the store, if they can hold a job.

I was telling some people at the church that it doesn't really matter what you had fifteen or twenty years ago. What will count is what you need in the future. Say I have twenty thousand dollars today. Well, if I let it all get away from me, and then later I'm in want . . . well, I'm in trouble. If I use that money unwisely, then I won't have anything. What your parents hand down, you should use well, and teach your children to hand it down in the future.

The old folks also had a way of doing their meal so they didn't run out. Sometimes they couldn't get it over to Lee County, over to Pennington Gap, Virginia, to the mill to grind it.

Then they would take a board and a piece of tin, and drive the piece of tin real full of holes with a nail. Then they'd turn the piece of tin over the opposite way, the way the nail had gone through. And the nail would have left all kinds of jaggedy places sticking up on the tin.

Then they would run the corn cobs over that, after they were dry and seasoned, so it would be ground up. I've seen Mother do that many a time. They called it a gritter, and it looked about like an old time washboard.

People used to use herbs for medicine, too, when they didn't have doctors. We used to get bearvine to bust up a cold. You put it in a tea kettle and boiled it real good. You let it get under a lot of pressure by cooking it to a high degree of heat. That would bring all the juice out of it.

Then the old folks would take it and strain it. And if the bitters were too awful stout, they'd throw a teaspoon of sugar in it. That would kind of flavor it, so it didn't taste so awful bad. It worked real good to bust up a cold or flu—things like that.

We'd grow catnip in the garden. That was a thing that was specially prepared for babies. Nobody's house anywhere near would be without catnip. They'd make tea out of it and give it to the baby for things like upset stomach or thrash.

Back up in the holler where we used to live, there was a good yellow oak tree. They used that for a sprained foot or a stone bruise. You'd go get some skin off the oak, and prepare it just the way you did bearvine. But you used the juice like a liniment. You put it on your leg or head, or wherever you'd gotten a lick or bruise.

Up until the 1950's when I was nearly grown up, I hardly knew what a doctor was. There were some company doctors over at Crummies. But that was four or five miles through the mountains. There wasn't a good road like there is now. You could call for the doctor there, and they would come when they got time, after work hours, and visit you at the house.

Mae's Stories

In Sargent Holler

When I was growing up, I lived down the road here in Sargent Holler. It was called Life Branch back then. I was born in 1921, and we moved there in 1925, so we were pretty much there as long as I can remember.

At that time, there was no road in the holler. What you got, you packed in up the creek. The only way to get in was to follow the creek. Then from the creek up to our house was about a mile and a half. It was a nice little hike when you had a load on your back! Anything we took to the house we had to carry.

If you wanted a fire, you had to cut your own wood. You had to saw it up and cut it into firewood yourself. There wasn't even any coal for fires until the mines were opened up.

That's about the only good thing you can say about the mines. After they were opened, you could get coal for fires. But the mines destroyed all the water. Strip mining destroyed all the timber and everything. They didn't try to get the timber out before they stripped.

Somebody could have made a good living off the timber if they had bothered to do it, and sawed it up. But they tore it all down stripping the coal. What was right at hand for them was all they were thinking about, I guess.

It doesn't make any sense. You'd go look around at some of the stripped places and see big pretty trees just lying there. Didn't do nobody no good.

That's what ruined the ginseng, too. All these nice big trees cut down and laying on top of it. The ginseng got covered with trees and dirt until it could never get back up.

Well, I reckon just about everything has changed since then. Sometimes I think it has changed for the better, and sometimes I think it has changed for the worse.

When we first moved into Sargent Holler, the water was real good. You could go out up there and get you a drink of water out of any of the branches that you wanted to. No matter where you were, if you were close to one of the hollers, you'd know you could get yourself a drink of good water. You didn't even have to think that the water might be bad, because it wasn't. It was never bad until it got tainted with everything in the world.

We had a real good spring up there by the house. The first strip mines that came up there went right directly through the spring. Just destroyed it. Nobody asked us about any of it. We went up there to get a bucket of water before we went to town. We went back up when we came home from town and the spring was gone.

Once it was gone, there was nothing we could do about it. It belonged to the company. We were renting from that Peabody Coal Company back then, and they sold out to the Harlan Land Company. When they did that, the land company took everything.

I doubt if there's anything up in that holler now that a body could tend like we did. We'd clear up new grounds and everything, but I guess now it's all gone. Well, I know that strip mine took about all the new grounds. And up around the house, that flood got about everything. So there's not much up there to work with if you could go back. There's no house any more to go back to. No road. No nothing.

Helping Out

In those days, what we had for food was pretty much what we could raise ourselves. Because of the creek, it was hard to carry anything into the holler. We had beans, corn, taters, pumpkin, cabbage, beets. Just about anything you can name that can be eaten, if it could be raised, we raised it. One year we put up a ten gallon crop of pickled beans. We used to get feed sacks full of things. And we'd get apples. Anything we could eat, we'd try to put it up—canned,dried, or however we could save it.

The women would get out and take a mattock and shovel and open up a coal bank to get us some coal. After I got a little older, my Uncle Eaf Sargent and I would get out and take down a big beech tree three or four feet across. We'd saw it up to keep Grandma warm.

Grandma was crippled up and couldn't get around. Uncle Eaf would help me get the wood for her. Mommy was trying to take in enough washing to be able to buy us some bread when we didn't have any. Aunt Molly was taking care of Grandma then. And so that's the way it went. Whoever got hold of something that needed to be done just went ahead with it.

The Midwife

When women had babies, they had a midwife. There were no doctors who would come around. Liddy Browning, the one who worked in the old Post Office, was the one who did all that. Then when she died, Cora Hall took her place. Then there was an old lady up on Catrons Creek that did birthing, but I don't know if there's anybody that does it now. I don't know if it's even legal anymore.

Well, the women knew what they were doing. If they hadn't, having a license wouldn't have meant anything, anyway. I guess it might keep the law off them, but it sure wouldn't help as far as knowing what to do. Now would it?

Learning From Scratch

Mommy and Aunt Molly taught me how to do most of the things that needed to be done. Those were things that we sort of had to learn "from scratch."

I guess the first thing I was taught was to take care of Grandma so they were free to go work in the field. When I was just a bitty thing, I used to sit on the sled with her, and we would play just like two young'uns. Back then we kept an old horse on that account—to pull the sled with Grandma up to the field.

We never had cows, but we had hogs every year, and had our own meat. From the time I was big enough to feed one, I helped take care of the hogs. If there was something to do and I was big enough to do it, I had to pitch in. That's what we all did.

We learned when and how to kill the hogs from the older folks. I guess they learned it from their elders when they were growing up. Things like that were just passed down as the younger folks were growing up.

We used to fish, too, but not like we do today. We'd take us a sledge hammer and hit the rocks to kill us a mess of fish, right out of this creek. We'd watch for the fish to go up under a rock, and then we'd take the hammer and hit the rock real hard. And they'd come floating out - great big ones, sometimes.

There used to be plenty of fish here. You could start out, and in an hour's time, you'd have a big eight pound lard bucket filled that way. Now you only see fish once in a while. There's not a supply like there used to be. That old mine water killed them all. I guess the fish can hardly live in this water any more. And you'd be afraid to eat a fish that did come out of this creek.

Good Times, Bad Times

I reckon the winters used to be a lot worse than they are now. It would stay fourteen or fifteen degrees below zero around here. I've had a bucket of water to freeze sitting right by the fire! It froze so hard we had to take a hammer and bust the ice to get the dipper out of it. We had a fire going in the grate and in the cookstove, too.

It used to be cold, and I mean COLD. These winters now seem like summer compared to the way it was back then. Mommy used to wash for people for a dollar a washing, and her dress would freeze plumb to her body.

When they'd go to pay her, it would be old meat, that had skippers or maggots in it. You'd have to wash it and soak it and everything else to get it off. We didn't really want to eat it a lot of times, but it was eat that or eat nothing.

So it was bad, bad times back then - and good times, too. It seemed like when you got out and worked you didn't get as tired. Well, maybe we're just getting old, is the reason, but it seemed like you didn't. You could work all day, and then run and kick up your heels until dark, after supper.

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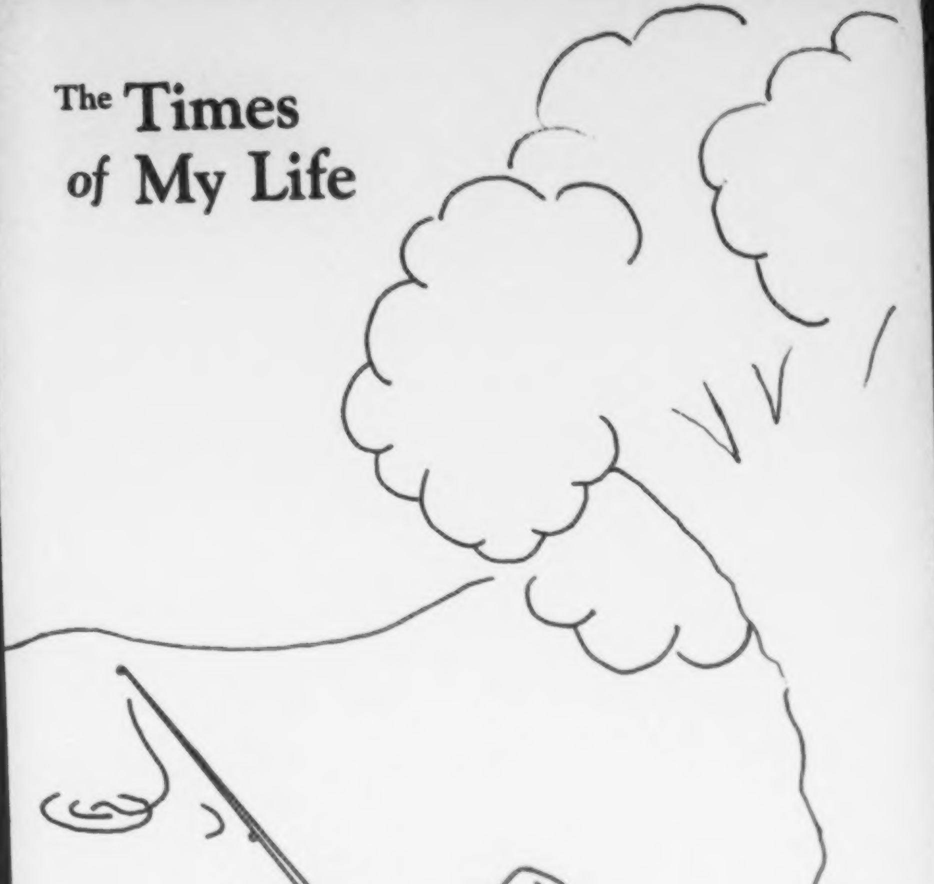

by
O.T.
Henderson

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II

The Times Of My Life

by

O.T. Henderson

Carol Warren
Todd Garland
Editors

"When I first came here, there were a lot of people, and a big town over there in Georgetown with a lot of streets. They sold whiskey here—a lot of the sisters did. A lot of things were happening then that don't go on any more."

In this booklet, O.T. Henderson, who worked on a plantation in Alabama when he was a very young boy, tells us how life used to be in Harlan County, Kentucky.

"It's different now, you see, because they moved everybody out of Georgetown. That's where we were living—over there across the bridge. All the houses were torn down, and everybody moved. They're building it up, now. They're going to build something over there—a ballpark. Nobody lives over there now. But all us black people lived there at the time."

A note to the tutor:

Two years ago, students at Harlan County Literacy began asking for materials that were not then available. Stories about local issues and local people were among these requests. This is the first in a series of six booklets intended to help fill the gap.

This booklet was developed from oral stories told to us by O. T. Henderson a Harlan County Literacy student. O.T. wants you to know that all these stories are true, and he is happy that these stories will be used by other reading students.

This booklet has been written at Grade 4 level, according to the Flesch-Kincaid readability scale.

Please help your student answer and mail back the evaluation found at the back of the booklet. This will help us improve our future efforts.

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For information address:
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I Move To Kentucky

When I first came here, there were a lot of people, and a big town over there in Georgetown with a lot of streets. They sold whiskey there—a lot of the sisters did. A lot of things were happening then that don't go on any more.

It's different now, you see, because they moved everybody out of Georgetown. That's where we were living—over there across the bridge. All the houses were torn down, and everybody moved. They're building it up, now. They're going to build something over there—a ballpark. Nobody lives over there now. But all us black people lived there at the time.

I had a hard time when I first moved here. My brother-in-law brought me here, and I got a job in Lynch working in the mines. I worked for a year with him, until I was about sixteen. I saved up some money during that year—about four or five thousand dollars. I had it hid in a trunk in my room.

Then they had a strike in 1941. They were fighting and killed a lot of people up here on Crummies Creek. We were on our way to Lynch one day and people started shooting at the car. We turned around and came back. We didn't know that there was picketing. They were picketing for a raise because the union was getting strong.

The next morning, after the picketing was over, my brother-in-law said, "I got to go to Lynch and get some groceries. You got five dollars?"

I said, "No, I ain't got five dollars in my pocket." And I went and tried to borrow five dollars, to keep him from knowing I had money.

When that didn't work, I raised the trunk up and got the money. He saw the money and he called my sister.

"Hey, come here!" he said. "Look at the money this boy has saved! Just put your money in the drawer. You know me and your sister won't bother it." So I took his word on that.

I didn't know it, but he'd taken a notion about buying a car. Well, he spent all my money on that car. Before I knew anything, he'd loaded up his clothes and was gone. He was in Detroit!

He got a job up there working at the steel mill. He never did come back. But he sent for my sister, and she went up there.

At that time, I walked up here at Chevrolet and got me a job. I walked up there to work for about two days. After that, I was able to get some scrip, and caught the bus for a dime. It was a dime up there, and a dime back. Back in those days things were cheap.

Things Have Changed

It was hard, but those were good times compared to what I'd had in southern Alabama. It was bad there. You see, we were working on these people's farm. They would make us do all the work.

They had a big plantation, and a nice house to live in. We would raise all the crops, and they would pay us once a year—just before Christmas.

The last year I raised fourteen bales of cotton and twenty-eight loads of corn. The owner got half the corn, and he got all the cotton. He would sell the cotton, and then he'd settle up with me. It was hard to get out of debt to the man.

I had to be at work between four and six o'clock in the morning, and I had to work until eight that night. I had to work sixteen hours a day. And if I was late, he'd whup me. He'd ride on a horse with a gun, and a big strap. So it was bad . . . it was like slave times down in that country.

That was before King went through there. Now they're good. They treat you better there now. I was down there about two years ago, and my cousins said, "Come on, let's go up here to the restaurant and eat."

I said, "Aw, they don't allow us to eat in the restaurant."

They said, "Oh yeah, things have changed now. You just go right in and order you something."

And so I went into the restaurant with them and ordered some food. It was a steak or something, with some french fries. And this white fellow was sitting in the booth—he told me to come on over and sit with him, so I did. He wouldn't even let me pay for my food. He paid for everything.

I said, "Well, y'all sure are good."

And he said, "Yeah, we mistreated you all, but we didn't know about all of that stuff."

So they treat you real nice down there now. But that's how I was raised up—in places like that.

Life On The Farm

My daddy got killed when I was two years old, and my mother died when I was fifteen. Then I really didn't know where to go. My mother was the only one I counted on to guide me, because she didn't send me to school. I didn't know anything.

They told me I didn't have time to go to school, I had to work. Well, you know, we were living on the people's place, and they made me work. We were poor and didn't have a thing—I had to do something!

When I was about five or six, my mother would have to go to work on the farm. She'd put on a pot of beans. She'd put a wooden box up against the stove and put out a pail of water. Then she'd say, "Now, son, when my pot gets empty, pour water in it."

And so I'd stand on the box and pour water in the pot until she came home about 11:30. Then she'd fix dinner and all of them would eat and go back to work . . . until she got too old to work.

I started working right after that, when I was about seven. I would have to get down and pick the cotton bolls and put them in a sack. All of us would go to work, and then come home and fix a sandwich, or Mama would fix us a sandwich. I was about eleven when she retired. But she took sick then, and didn't live long after that.

When I was about eight, I found they would pay me sixty cents a day to plow. Well, I wasn't nearly as tall as the plow handles. I couldn't stand up and plow like taller people. I was reaching up all day, and when I went home, my arms would be hurting. Mama would rub my arms real good, and I'd go back the next day. And I would take that money since they let me work. They were depending on me to do that work.

The foreman said, "Yeah, this boy plows as good as the men do! Let him work! Yeah, make him work!"

You know, they didn't want me to leave. I almost had to slip away with my brother-in-law, in fact. My step-dad was saying, "I want you to stay here and work."

But I said, "No, I'm going on with them. When I do work here I don't get to keep my pay." And I went with my sister and brother-in-law when they came after me. That's when I came up here to Kentucky.

Work In The Mines

When I first went to work in the mines I was so scared I like to run over the motor. The first day, I went in the mine with my brother-in-law.

He said, "You stay here 'til the motor comes. I'll be back—I'm going to get you a shovel." There weren't any shovels in the places we were working.

Well, he went to get me a shovel, and a man backed a car up in there. And I was scared—I didn't know where to go. I went over to the car, and finally he parked the car. My brother-in-law came back and we loaded that car. It held about five or six tons—really a big car. Well, we loaded the car, and the motor came back and pulled that one off, and put us another one up there.

After my brother-in-law left, I went up to Chevrolet and got me a job. When I first started at Chevrolet, I really didn't know how to work. I got three tons one day, and the next day I think I got about five. They had me in a bad place. I had to shovel the coal and carry it to the car. The car was sitting off yonder, a ways off from the coal pile. I couldn't get it any closer to the coal. The top was bad and everything, so I just shoveled the coal and carried it to the car.

I worked like that for two or three days and then the boss man came by. He said, "I'm going to give you a good place. I believe you want to work if you'll work in this place." And so he put me where the car would come right up to the coal. After that, I started loading 25, 30, 40, 50 tons of coal a day. So I got to doing good then. I was making fifteen or twenty dollars a day.

We got paid eight dollars for traveling time—that's for going in and coming back. And we got 76 cents a ton for the coal. The more coal you'd load, the more you'd make.

It ain't too bad in the mines if you keep it timbered up. You learn how to take care of yourself in the place. You examine the top . . . you've got to keep examining the top. I could tell when the top was broken, when it was going to fall. And I knew when to get out.

I was down at Closplint one time. The top was so bad, this man told me, "Now this top doesn't let you know when it's going to fall. It'll just fall in on you."

Well, it looked so bad, I got out of there. I went to talk to a friend of mine who was working in another place. I told him, "My top's going to fall in."

And he said, "Aw, I don't know."

When I went back to look, and to load some more coal, that roof had fallen in all the way across the place. It took them two or three weeks to get that car out. I know if I had been in there, I'd have been dead!

Yeah, you learn how to take care of yourself. And then sometimes, I don't care how good you do, you get killed. And not only in there, but out here when your time is up. A lot of people get killed.

I was working at Crummies Creek, and six boys got killed in one day. I quit! I said, "Huh-uh! That's too many getting killed in the same mine." It was dangerous. I had to crawl back in there with this little car. And sometimes before I'd get the car out, rock would fall all over the track and I'd have to pick the rock up to move the car. Rock was falling so fast I quit. I couldn't make any money that way at all.

I liked working up in Lynch, but when my brother-in-law quit I only had about a year's experience. I went to my superintendent and talked to him about it. But he told me, "No, you have to have two years' experience working under somebody. And if he quits, you have to find somebody else to carry you. I can't let you go in there and work by yourself."

I guess it was dangerous because of gas and stuff like that. So I just didn't ever go back there to work.

The Union

I never did get in any of the union battles that were going on. One day I was out on the street, and a truckload of people came by. They said, "Hey, do you work in the mines?"

And I said, "Yeah." I told them before I knew what they were up to.

They said, "Well, we're going on a picket line up in Lynch."

So I said, "Yeah? Well, I tell you what, you'll have to wait until I go home." I told them I needed to get something before I could go—I don't remember what. Well, I went home and I hid! I didn't come back, 'cause I wasn't going on any picket line! They went on—they couldn't find me.

People tried to get me to go on some other occasions, too, but I wouldn't go. I didn't want to get killed, and I didn't want to kill anybody—'cause it's just as bad to kill somebody as it is to get killed. I'd just as soon be in the graveyard as to be in ball and chains for the rest of my life.

But I did join the union—while I was working at Lynch. This man came down there—a big old fat man. He was a black man. He sort of whispered,"I want you to sign this but you can't let nobody see." He said to sign my name, but I just crossed the pen, I couldn't even write my name back then. So I had a slip and signed it. He said everybody signed it, but they didn't want the company to see.

If the company had seen it, they'd have run him away from there. And if they'd known I signed it, they'd have fired me. Well, the first thing they knew, everybody belonged to the union, and that's when it came in and organized.

I worked on the railroad a little while, about three months. I quit, though—I didn't like the railroad. The miners were on strike, and we stayed out about three months. My superintendent came and told me to come back to work. He said I was a good coal loader—I was loading about fifty tons a day. He wanted me back. So I quit the railroad and went back to work in the mines.

We were doing repairs on the railroad. We'd pull the spikes out of the crossties, then we'd take some tongs and pull the crossties up. Then we'd take the rails up and lay new ones. It was hard work. We'd work 48 hours a week. But we'd get through on Friday about 10:00, and we'd take off then until Monday morning. For four days, we'd work ten or eleven hours, and then on Friday we'd only work two or three. On Friday, we'd eat lunch maybe, and then take the train and go home, stay until Sunday night, and then go back.

But I didn't like it. It was too hot in the summertime and too cold in the winter. The boss man said, "Come on, O.T. You're going to like it after a while. I ain't got a man here who's been too hot." But I got so hot I fell out one day down there, working on that railroad.

In Our Free Time

In the evening when I'd come out of the mine, I'd generally work at the Cumberland Valley Music Store. They always wanted somebody to help them carry a piano somewhere. I knew a fellow that worked there, Sonny Boy. His name was Sylvester Bunny, but we all called him Sonny Boy. He'd be hunting somebody to help carry a piano, or a stove or something.

When I didn't have to work up there with him in the evening, we'd play ball sometimes, or we'd play dominoes. Law, we used to play those dominoes! I'd have a partner, and someone else would have a partner—four of us would play at a time. We'd play "Rise and Fly." If I beat you the first game, you'd have to get up and let another couple play. Then if they beat me, I'd have to get up. That way, we'd play so that everybody got into the game.

These two old fellows were playing one day. One of them was called Popeye, and the other's name was Joe Lee. They were old! And I beat them!

They got mad! One of them told the other, "Play this bone here, play one on there, play that one here!" And he didn't do it.

He said, "No, wait a minute! Let me play this one here, not that one."

Well, I got about sixty spots and they wanted to fight!

Fishing

Really, we had a lot of fun coming up. I fished a lot, too. We used to go fishing down in Tennessee, me and Claude Beach and James Cooksey. At that time, I didn't drive, but I bought two or three cars before I started driving. James would drive the car when we went fishing.

James was a good big fellow. He's dead now. He lived over in Georgetown, next door to me. He was my partner. We'd always go fishing together, things like that.

Claude was white, but he was always part of the group. Knowing that he had a place over in Georgetown, we'd go to his place and sit around and drink or talk. And he'd go fishing with us, too.

Everywhere Claude went, he'd carry a big .45! So I was trying to get away from him, since he was carrying that big pistol and all. I didn't trust it not to go off if he was fishing and dropped it or something.

So this one time, I went out below the trees on the rocks and was fishing out there. James was up further, a little piece. So here came Claude, trying to climb out on the rocks. That big old pistol fell and hit the rocks—bloop, bloop, bloop!

Well, it didn't go off, but I said, "That thing could go off if you had it cocked. You're liable to shoot somebody. I don't see how come you don't leave it at home." That's what I said to him, 'cause he was mean—he'd kill you. But we were raised up together, and we'd fight together . . . so we were really buddies.

The next time we went fishing, he didn't carry the pistol. Well, some white fellows came by where we were fishing, about five of them, in a boat.

One of them said, "Hey! Look over there sitting on the bank—two niggers and a white man!"

Oh boy! James got mad! He said, "Huh! They called me a nigger!"

I said, "Well, that ain't nothing! I'm satisfied with them calling me a nigger as long as they go on ahead and don't bother me."

Claude looked around at me and said, "Don't say nothing to me, I didn't bring my pistol! They can kill us today if they want to!"

Later that evening, we were coming back from fishing and Claude was driving. James was sitting in front with him. A little way down the road, Claude saw that the police were in the road, checking licenses and things.

Claude stopped the car and said, "James, come on, you drive. I ain't got no license, and I just got out of prison not too long ago, last year. They won't allow me to have a license."

So James got over and drove the car on up there. That big policeman walked over to the car and said, "Hey! I saw you driving this car." He said to Claude, "How come you changed? Have you got a driver's license?"

And Claude said, "No sir, I ain't got one."

That policeman said, "I'm gonna tell you—if I take you in, they'll sure give you some time, and they'll charge you a big fine. But I'm gonna let you go."

Claude said, "Yes sir, you're talking right now!"

And then when we got home, Claude told me, "You see there? You caused me not to have my pistol today. If I'd had it, I'd have been in trouble, 'cause I wouldn't have let them talk to me the way they did."

I said, "Yeah, I can see you firing a pistol at them!"

Claude Was Mean

One night we were fishing until pretty late, and by the time we got to Pineville it was dark. We had two or three tubs of fish—we had caught a lot of fish that day—and the car was weighted down some. The police got behind my car just as we turned at the spring to get a drink of water before we headed up toward Harlan.

A policeman said, "Give me the key. Open this trunk—I want to look in there."

I said, "Well, I ain't got nothing in there but some fish."

And Claude jumped out with his pistol, and told them, "You ain't looking in the trunk! I know you all—you've done me wrong up there in Harlan."

Well, I said, "Claude, it's my car. Let them look—there's nothing back there but fish."

But, you see, Claude would sell whiskey, and haul whiskey. They'd stopped him before when he'd had a truckload, and he wasn't going to let them stop him again.

The policeman said, "Well, we could kill him, but we don't want to kill anybody." So they let us go on, and they went on back to town.

Claude really was mean. He killed about nine or ten people—I know that myself.

One day he told me this guy named Pool and a couple others stole some liquor from him. He said he was going to kill them when he got the chance.

Well, Pool was a young fellow, only about 21 or 22. So I told him, "Hey, boy, why don't you get on out of here, because Claude is gonna kill you."

He said,"Aww, he likes me better than he does you!"

I said, "I don't see how! We were raised up here, we fought like cats and dogs, and we shot marbles together. He ain't gonna do nothing to me. But I thought I should tell you."

But he didn't leave, and Claude shot him one night. Shot his kidneys out. They took him to the hospital, but it didn't do any good. He died that same night. I told him to leave, but he was so hard-headed he didn't pay anybody any attention. So Claude killed him over there in Georgetown.

Abe's Offer

Abe Hensley had this little crib-like place, sort of a little one-room house back behind his house. He had it stocked with whiskey and stuff. Well, Jack Reed and Bill Buddy broke in there one night. They got a truck and took a load of whiskey out of there and sold it.

I was in the pool hall after I came in from work. A guy came in and said, "Hey, Abe Hensley wants you." Well, Abe was the Chief of Police.

I said, "What's he want with me?" I was playing a game of pool at the time. So I didn't go. I said, "No, I ain't going. I'll let him come and get me."

I just went on playing, until his wife came in there, Mrs. Bea Hensley. She said, "Abe wants to see you."

And I said, "Why does he keep sending for me?" And I just put the stick in the rack and went on down to see what he wanted.

Abe said that Jack Reed and Bill Buddy stole his whiskey last night. Bill Buddy had left already and was gone. Abe had three pistols lying on the counter, or maybe four or five. And he had a quart of whiskey and stuff sitting on the table. He had one pile of money to one side, and another pile of money to the other side.

He said, "Here's three thousand dollars. Put that in your pocket. And here's eight thousand that might get you a house. I want you to kill Jack Reed."

I said, "Huh-uh! I ain't killing nobody!" And I poured myself a drink of whiskey, and instead of turning around and opening the door, I started backing out of there, because I didn't want to kill anyone!

Later Claude came out and said, "You did right. Abe knows he can trust you now. He thought you wanted to kill somebody. If you had killed Jack Reed, he was going to have somebody kill you."

Well, I never did kill anybody, and they never bothered me about it again.But that's the way they used to do that kind of stuff. I think that's wrong. I said I could never kill anybody in cold blood, anyway.

I told them, "Now if Jack Reed comes around messing with me, that might be a good way to get him killed. But I'm never going to just kill somebody in cold blood—no way." And they never bothered me after that.

The Sheriff

It was rough in those days. Well, everybody in the town was kind of crazy then. They don't do stuff like that, anymore. Now I can sit under a light in the window all night and not worry about getting shot at.

Things started to get better when Bill Randolph was the sheriff. He was trying to civilize Harlan. He carried these pistols with springs on them. He had one pistol in a holster on his right side, and another one on his left. All he had to do was jerk his elbows in real tight, and those pistols would jump into his hands!

People acted good when he was around. He'd come over in Georgetown, and ask us black people, "Is anybody bothering you all? They'd better not bother you. I'm going to civilize this place. So if anybody comes messing around with you, just let me know and I'll stop them."

Smith Ball owned the courthouse at that time. He owned a lot of land around here—he was rich. Well, Bill Randolph caught Smith Ball out on the street drunk. He told him, "Come on, I'm taking you to jail."

So Smith Ball said, "I don't know what you're going to take me to jail for—I own the jail!"

Bill Randolph said, "Well, I'm just taking you home, then—you got to go!"

Because of things like that, people were always trying to kill the sheriff. But most of the ones that tried got killed themselves. They couldn't get to him to kill him. But he had a friend—he had a buddy. And some fellows paid his buddy so many thousand dollars to kill him. He was asleep. His friend shot him while he was sleeping!

That was about 1941 or 1942. I hadn't been here long, and I didn't know anything about it until I got here. But then folks told me things about the sheriff. I guess maybe I saw him two or three times before he got killed.

Really, he did a lot of good. Things were rough in Georgetown then. I worked for a while in a restaurant over there for Abe Hensley and some other men. They had me selling whiskey and food. The police would come in and buy stuff, too.

It was so bad, I had to hire a man to sit in front with a pistol to watch me! Men would come in and try to shoot me while I was selling whiskey and stuff. They'd get drunk and just start shooting things up. A lot of fools were here at that time. Bill Randolph got rid of all that. Anyone around here who is old remembers him.

Going to School

I can read a little bit. In my Bible, I can read some of the words, but there are some I don't know. So I don't get up to read in church.

But I'm still going to school. I'm learning! But, see, I just go for an hour on Tuesday and an hour on Thursday. So it's taken me quite a while to learn that way. But if I was going every day for a month or two, I'd learn a lot.

By the time someone teaches me a little on Tuesday, at the age I am, if I'm not careful to keep studying, I'll forget it. By the next time I go, I'll forget what I learned.

I practice a lot at home. I've got books. I started off with one book, and now I think I've got seven. My teacher gives me some things to learn before I go back the next time.

Cut along dotted line.

Please ask your tutor to help you answer these questions and mail them back to us. This will help us make better books.

Is the book's subject interesting to you?

Is the book easy to understand?

Are the directions easy to understand?

Are there words in the book you do not know?

Are there words in the book you do not use?

What do you like about the book?

What do you not like about the book?

Fold along dotted line

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